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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
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INSIDE



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15 Years

In 1993, Vaclav Havel was elected President of the Czech Republic and Dallas defeated Buffalo in the Super Bowl. It was also the year when McDonald's Saipan was born.

LOCAL...Page 8



3 Missing

New York rescuers dug through debris Sunday for three people still missing in the rubble and wreckage.

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Tibet Protests

Protests spread from Tibet into three neighboring provinces Sunday.

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DPS gets car seat check-up van, \$20K grant. **PAGE 2**

'So who is picking up the tab for Hess' visit?' **PAGE 3**

Action on S.2739 after recess

'Omnibus bill won't go back to the US House'

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

The U.S. Senate is expected to act on the omnibus bill that includes federalization of CNMI immigration after the spring recess.

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'Current rate of gov't spending should stop'

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

If the spending trend of government agencies is not abated, the Commonwealth's coffers would

be close to bare by the end of the fiscal year, according to Gov. Benigno R. Fitial.

In a memo sent to all expenditure authorities Friday, the

See **CURRENT** on Page 4

US nears 4,000 dead in Iraq

By BRADLEY BROOKS
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

BAGHDAD (AP)—Sometime soon, the U.S. military will suf-

fer the 4,000th death of the war in Iraq.

When the 1,000th American died in September 2004, the in-

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AP

An Army honor guard carries the casket of Army Spc. Luke Runyan during a funeral services at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., Monday, March 10, 2008. Runyan, of Spring Grove, Pa., was killed Feb. 17 in Diyala Province of Iraq of small arms fire.



MINI NUTRITION FAIR

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

A child looks at the various food groups displayed inside a food pyramid at the NMC CREES Expanded Food Nutrition Program booth during the Mini Nutrition Fair at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library in Susupe Saturday morning. The event was held in observance of the 2008 Nutrition Month celebration.

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CONNECT

Local

DPS gets car seat check-up van, \$20K grant

The Department of Public Safety has acquired a mobile car seat check-up van through federal grants and was awarded another \$20,000 for the teen driver safety program.

Acting DPS Commissioner Claudio K. Norita and other DPS officials announced yesterday the acquisition of the car seat check-up van and the \$20,000 federal grant.

DPS spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said the Office of Grants and Special Programs, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, provided DPS Traffic Section with the mobile car seat check-up van.

Ogumoro said the van would be used to conduct public education campaigns on child passenger safety.

As for the \$20,000 grant, Ogumoro said the CNMI was named as one of the state agencies that will get the national grants to further develop teen driver safety programs in the Commonwealth.

"The grants from the Ford Motor Company Fund are part of the company's Driving Skills for Life program, designed to help states and territories in-



Acting Department of Public Safety Commissioner Claudio K. Norita points at the mobile car seat check-up van, as he is being interviewed by the local media.

crease awareness of the hazards of teen driving and teach the critical skills that the youth need to respond to the demands of the road," she said.

The CNMI was one of two territories and nine states that

were awarded over \$200,000 in grants.

"This is part of the national award-winning DSFL teen driving program developed in partnership between the Governors' Highway Safety Association

and the Ford Motor Company Fund," Ogumoro said.

The \$20,000 grant, she explained, will help develop the CNMI's teen driving initiatives and marks the first time a private company has given state

highway safety agencies grants for teen safety programs.

Norita said the DSFL grant funds will be used to educate students and those not currently reached through other teen driver initiatives.

"Teens everywhere have a higher rate of injury and fatal

crashes. High risk behavior, peer pressure, inexperience, limited use or no use of safety belts, and lack of proper driving information and education are just a few of the problems our youth face while driving on CNMI's roadways," Norita said. *(Ferdie de la Torre)*

Community reflects on Vatican's three new sins

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
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REPORTER

Environmentalists and the local Catholic Church said they are happy with the Vatican's recent move to add three more to the list of sins—pollution, drugs, and genetic manipulation.

Fr. Ryan Jimenez said with the three new areas of sinful behavior, the Vatican is "not trying to change the whole doctrine of the Catholic Church but trying to be more relevant to the needs of the people in the modern era."

The Vatican updated the list of mortal sins recently to relate to the age of globalization.

Monsignor Gianfranco Girotti, who heads the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican body that

issues decisions on matters of conscience and grants absolutions, said that while sin used to concern the individual mostly, today it has a more social resonance due to the phenomenon of globalization.

Jimenez said the Catholic Church is merely adapting to the modern world and the updated list of sins seeks to ensure that the faithful are "in tune in our day-to-day living."

Environmentalist Doris Sablan said she is happy to hear that the Catholic Church is making a "huge effort in recognizing pollution as a sin."

"People who wish to do good listen to the church. Now people can be more mindful," she said.

See **COMMUNITY** on Page 4



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'So who is picking up the tab for Hess' visit?'

By **RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN**
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

In case people are wondering as to who is spending for the visit and the help that College of Marshall Islands president Wilson G. Hess is extending to the Northern Marianas College, he is here using money out of his own pocket, according to NMC officials.

The assistance also falls under the Pacific Postsecondary Education Council, which was established as a non-profit public benefit corporation to address the concerns and needs of Pacific island post-secondary institutions.

The Council consists of chief executive officers of public colleges and universities in the American-affiliated Pacific islands, which includes the American Samoa, CNMI, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Republic of the

Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau and Hawaii.

NMC president Carmen Fernandez said, "NMC is fortunate to have his [Hess] support and is extremely grateful to him and the CMI Board of Regents for providing guidance and assistance at no cost to the college."

Hess arrived last week to offer his support and assistance "at no cost" to help NMC overcome its show-cause status.

He said that NMC had helped the College of Marshall Islands when they had their own issues and what better to do than reciprocate the action.

Through the PPEC, higher education institutional leaders in the Pacific agreed to work collaboratively to serve the needs of members' institutions as they address regional and postsecondary education issues. Hess is a member of the council.

Fernandez thinks that Hess would be a great help to NMC

in helping it address its accreditation woes.

She said that Hess "brought the CMI out of show-cause status and the college is now in warning."

In addition to Hess bringing CMI out of show cause status, he is actively participating in accreditation review of other institutions, Fernandez said.

"We will be working closely with him on this process. As you know, he's a highly respected expert in the field. He's a retired president," she said.

According to the PPEC, the sharing of resources and information by and between educational institutions throughout the Pacific region "is not uncommon."

The PPEC, of which Fernandez is the vice chair, is an assembly of presidents from higher education institutions in the Western Pacific charged with that specific purpose.

Engine repair and hot weather trigger rotating outages anew

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Rotating outages hit Saipan anew yesterday after the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. failed to produce enough power due to ongoing repair on one of the power engines at the Power Plant 1 in Lower Base and the high power demand brought on by the hot weather.

The outages started at 9am. CUC anticipated implementing the load shedding until 10pm last night.

CUC Power Division acting manager Gary P. Camacho said that CUC mechanics continue to do maintenance work on engine no. 5 at the Lower Base plant.

"As a result of these repairs, the power plants will not be able to generate the required electrical power to adequately meet island demand; therefore, load shedding is required," Camacho said.

From 9am to 11am the outage occurred at Joeten Dandan Commercial Complex, Kannat Tabla, Stanford Hotel, and at the Saipan International Airport.

The airport remained offline until yesterday afternoon, Camacho said.

From 11am to 1pm, the outage affected Anaks Condos, Marina Heights Business complexes in Puerto Rico, Upper China Town and Upper Miha.

From 1pm to 3pm, the blackout was at the Fishing Base Garapan south to San Jose intersection.

From 3pm to 5pm, the outage was at Mt. Carmel area south to

portions of Chalan Kanoa.

In addition, CUC cut power to the Chalan Kiya area from 3pm to 5pm because of the hot weather yesterday afternoon.

"It [high temperature] raised the island's power demand, making it very difficult to meet the demand," Camacho said.

He said the CUC crew has been working hard to quickly fix the problem.

From 5pm to 7pm the sched-

uled outage was on Capital Hill, Kagman, and Papago.

From 7pm to 9pm, the announced outage was in San Antonio, Afetnas, Koblerville, As Gonno, and at Coral Ocean Point.

From 9pm to 10pm the scheduled outage affected the entire feeder 7 grid, including the Lower Base industrial area, north to Tanapag, Achugao, San Roque, As Matuis, and Marpi.



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Naval Sea Cadets establish a new unit in Guam

SANTA RITA, GUAM—The U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps have authorized the Guam council of the Navy League of the United States to establish a new Sea Cadet unit in Guam. The Sea Cadets is a youth program dedicated to introducing youth to naval life, to develop in them a sense of pride, patriotism, courage, and self-reliance, and to maintain an environment free of drugs and gangs.

The Peredo Battalion will be established at Naval Base Guam; however, cadets in the program are not required to be DoD dependants, according to Ens. Tim Marinelli, commanding officer of the new unit. The Sea Cadets is open to all American citizens, ages 11 to 18, who are interested in learning more about the Navy as well as the

other sea services.

The new unit is being named for Vicenta Chargualaf Peredo, "Seabee Betty," who has been an icon in Seabee history here on Guam over the last fifty years, known for her hospitality to deployed service members and outreach efforts to unite military and civilians living on Guam.

"As a Sea Cadet battalion, the focus will be on Seabee-type training, and we wanted the name of the new unit to have a strong tie to Guam as well as the Seabees, and represent the spirit of community service. Naming the unit for Seabee Betty definitely fits the bill," said Marinelli.

Current Guam Sea Cadet units continue to work and build relationships with active duty military on Naval

Base Guam. The cadets have trained with Seabees deployed to Camp Covington, and with Guam-based Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron Seven, EOD Mobile Unit Five, the Coast Guard and other operational units. Most recently, Guam Sea Cadets embarked USNS *Bridge* for an underway training event on the Military Sealift Command vessel.

"We have had great support from the Naval Base and military commands here on Guam, as well as from the local Navy League. We look forward to continuing this relationship between the Sea Cadets and Naval Base with the Peredo Battalion, and as Guam's Sea Cadet corps grows in the future," said Marinelli.

Currently there are two Sea Cadet

units on Guam: the Marianas Division and Training Ship Cdr. W. C. McCool.

"The addition of the Peredo Battalion will offer cadets more variety and additional opportunities both for training throughout the year as well as for summer trainings," according to Lt. Cdr. Cecilio Gonzales, NSCC, the Associate Regional Director for the Sea Cadets in Guam. "Cadets have a chance to take part in one or two week summer trainings including 'boot camp,' Seaman-ship training, Aviation training, Seabee Construction and Field training, and Leadership training," Gonzales said. "We are also looking to add future units in the central and northern parts of the island as the program continues to grow on Guam."

The Corps is also looking for ad-

ditional adult volunteers as well. Sea Cadet Officers and instructors include active and reserve military from all services, National Guard, veterans, retirees, parents, and others who are interested in supporting the program.

"The most important qualification is that you are there for the Cadets. It is great to have a mix from all backgrounds both from different services as well as civilians to keep the program well-rounded," said Gonzales.

Prospective cadets and adult volunteers who would like more information about the Sea Cadets can visit www.seacadets.org or email Lt.Cdr. Cecilio Gonzales at medic1_cag@hotmail.com, or Ens. Tim Marinelli at timber73@yahoo.com or by telephone at 734-8508. **(USN)**

US

From Page 1

surgency was just gaining steam. The 2,000th death came as Iraq held its first elections in decades, in October 2005. The U.S. announced its 3,000th loss on the last day of 2006, at the end of a year rocked by sectarian violence.

The 4,000th death will come with the war further out of the public eye, and replaced by other topics on the front burner of the U.S. presidential campaigns.

Analysts say the 4,000 dead, while an arbitrary marker, could inject the war debate back into the campaign season, particularly with the war's fifth anniversary on Thursday. Or, with overall violence lower in Iraq, the milestone could pass with far less public discussion than in past years.

Last year was the deadliest for American troops in Iraq, with 901 troops killed. As of Sunday, at least 3,988 Americans have died in Iraq.

James Carafano, a military analyst with the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, said that the decline in violence since 30,000 troops were sent into Iraq last summer has been more important in the public's eye.

"Americans are not casualty averse. They are failure averse," Carafano said. "They were unhappy with the lack of progress and spiraling violence. That is why you have seen public support rebound after it was clear the surge was working."

The number killed in Iraq is far less than in other modern American wars. In Vietnam, the U.S. lost on average about 4,850 troops a year from 1963-75. In the Korean war, from 1950-53, the U.S. lost about

12,300 soldiers a year.

A 2006 Duke University study found that it was 100 times as likely that an American knew one of the 292,000 Americans killed in World War II than someone today would know a service member slain in Iraq.

Soldiers and analysts alike say the impact of the deaths in Iraq has been largely lost on many Americans who have no personal connection to the war.

"It's still a war that hasn't involved a draft or an increase in taxes," said Jon Alterman, who heads the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "This is a war that most Americans continue to feel they don't have to make sacrifices for."

Alterman said that while the Iraq war has not played as big of a role in the campaigns as once expected, the confluence of 4,000 slain troops, the fifth

anniversary and the crucial Pennsylvania Democratic primary could push the war back to the forefront.

"It may be that stacking three things together refocuses the debate," he said. "Or it may be that people are simply tired of the war, tired of talking about it and are wanting to think of something else."

Carafano said that the public's seeming indifference to casualty figures is the rule—not the exception—for most wars America has been in.

"In war and everything else Americans get energized when they are touched in a personal way. In most wars, not just Iraq, that does not happen," he said.

Retired Army Gen. Barry McCaffrey said during a recent speech at the Council of Foreign Relations in New York that the situation for U.S. soldiers in Iraq is "infinitely better" now that during 2006, when

Americans were losing the equivalent of a battalion—about 600 to 1,000 soldiers—a month to deaths and injuries.

But McCaffrey said the U.S. military is being drained of its energy and morale because of the slow pace of training that will allow more Iraqi soldiers to take over the fight. American soldiers, he said, are "becoming increasingly unsure about the position they've been placed in."

What that position is will largely be determined by who wins the presidency in November.

"The military is very conscious of the long-term costs of the war," Alterman said. "But we have a civilian-led military and it is for the civilians to decide when we fight and how we fight. As much as the military is conscious of the costs of continuing to fight, they are also aware it isn't their decision whether to stop or not."

CURRENT

From Page 1

CNMI's chief executive referred to the Fund Status Report attached to Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Villagomez's letter dated Feb. 6, 2008, and said that, by the way things are going, Commonwealth agencies have no choice but to tighten

their respective belts.

"Per the report, almost all of the business units are expected to exceed budget authority if expenditures continue at the same rate as it has been for the first four months of the fiscal year (from Oct. 1, 2007 to Jan. 1, 2008)," noted Fitial in his memo.

As a result, Fitial announced that the Governor's Office from now on will

more seriously look at expenditures and hiring practices of government agencies.

"Effective immediately, within the Executive Branch, all request for the purchase of goods and services plus to fill vacant positions will be further scrutinized to ensure that they are essential for the delivery of public services," he said.

"It is expected of all expenditure authorities to make the necessary prudent

financial decisions at their levels so only the most essential purchases and vacant positions are filled for the remainder of the fiscal year," Fitial added.

The governor last week said he will continue to work with the Legislative for laws allowing relief measures that will decrease the rate of expenditures and maximize the remaining budget authority.

He said the government's challenge is to reduce monthly expenditures from an average of \$15 million per month to essentially \$13 million per month for the remainder of the fiscal year.

However, even if the House and Senate pass the relief measures, Fitial said they will still not be able to reduce the government's projected budget authority shortfall of \$14 million to zero.

ACTION

From Page 1

According to Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee spokesman Bill Wicker, S.2739, or the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008, would be considered after the break, which lasts from March 17 to 28.

"There is no timeframe for this bill, though action is expected after this spring recess," he said in a Blackberry message to the *Saipan Tribune*.

Wicker added that the new omnibus bill that took the place of S.2483 will

not go before a U.S. Senate committee but will be considered directly on the Senate floor. "That's because all of the components in the new bill have already been considered by the committee."

He added that the general reaction to S.2739 is very encouraging. "All the measures in it have strong bipartisan, bicameral support. None of the provisions included in this omnibus bill are controversial."

If the Senate approves the legislation, the only thing missing for it to become law is President Bush's signature.

"The bill, once passed by the Senate,

will not return to the House [of Representatives]; it will go straight to President [Bush] for enactment," said Wicker.

The new omnibus bill, introduced on March 10 by Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D, NM), is a repackaged S.2483 with the addition of eight new bills, bringing the total number of bills in the package (including CNMI legislation) to 62, according to Wicker.

And like S.2483, Title VII of S.2739 would extend immigration law and create a federally run guest-worker program in the CNMI.

It would also give the CNMI a delegate in the House with limited voting

powers. Currently, all U.S. possessions except the CNMI have a delegate in Congress.

The provision also includes language that will benefit Guam. Under the bill, there will be a unified visa-waiver program for Guam and the CNMI based on the existing Guam-only visa waiver program, which was authorized by Congress in 1986.

The new visa waiver program would authorize tourists entering either Guam or the CNMI under the program to stay in either location, or any combination of both locations for a maximum 45 days. This extends the current Guam-

only visa waiver program, which provides only for a 15-day period of stay.

In addition, the provision would provide exemptions to Guam and the CNMI from national caps for the number of H-2 temporary worker visas that could be issued for work in either location. This is expected to help Guam and the CNMI meet the construction demands associated with the planned military buildup in the region.

S.2739 adopted the provisions of H.R. 3079, which was passed by the House of Representatives on Dec. 11, 2007. It was crafted by Rep. Donna Christensen of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

COMMUNITY

From Page 2

Beatify CNMI volunteer Angel Villagomez said that, as far as pollution goes, "I think it is great that the Catholic Church wants to be more involved in protecting people's health."

"When people dump throw their household garbage into a ravine or dump used oil into a drain, they are

hurting everyone living in that village. I'm glad that the church is recognizing that as a sin," Villagomez said.

However, the addition of drugs, he said, ignores "the fact that millions of people depend on medication to stay alive and remain healthy."

"Where do you draw the line between good and bad? Why is it a sin to smoke marijuana to ease pain, but not a sin to take two Advil?" Villagomez said.

Drugs, the Vatican believes,

"weakens the mind and obscure intelligence; pollution; as well as the widening social and economic differences between the rich and the poor that cause an unbearable social injustice."

Girotti denounced "certain violations of the fundamental rights of human nature through experiments, genetic manipulations."

Jimenez said the Catholic Church still stands strong in its belief that

human life is a gift from God and that "we cannot manipulate what is given to us."

Traditionally the Catholic church has had a list of seven deadly sins—lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride—established by Pope Gregory the Great in the 6th century. The terms entered the popular vocabulary after the publication of Dante's "Divine Comedy."

The deadly sins are in contrast with

venial sins—relatively minor sins that can be forgiven.

According to Catholic Church teaching, a person that commits a mortal sin risks burning in hell unless absolved through confession and penitence.

Now the Vatican says it is time to modernize the list to fit a global world.

"We can now begin teaching something updated and for the people. Hopefully, it means more guidance," Jimenez said.

Miura's legal team optimistic Geragos will prevail

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Japanese businessman Kazuyoshi Miura's legal team on Saipan expressed optimism yesterday that their co-counsel, high-profile attorney Mark Geragos, will prevail in his double jeopardy argument in California.

William Fitzgerald, one of Miura's three lawyers on Saipan, pointed out that their position is that California doesn't have the right to prosecute the 60-year-old Miura.

"And that's really very basic, very simple, very logical, [and] easy to understand," said Fitzgerald as he and co-counsel Bruce Berline answered the media's questions shortly after the two lawyers met Miura at the Department of Corrections yesterday afternoon.

Fitzgerald said the really important issue now is Geragos' motion in California.

Geragos filed a motion on Friday seeking to throw out the Los Angeles arrest warrant for the businessman. The lawyer asserted that a new trial for Miura would be double jeopardy because he was already tried in Japan.

"I think you should focus more on that and look at Mr. Geragos' motion and see the very strong arguments in there, that California should not be allowed to do this," Fitzgerald told the media, composed mostly of Japanese journalists.

The lawyer said the media should concentrate on the double jeopardy issue rather than focusing on the scheduling of habeas corpus.

"Really, the important thing is that motion," Fitzgerald stressed.

He said he just came from Japan for a different purpose, but at the same time he met with law professor William Cleary, whom Miura retained as an expert in Japanese law.

Cleary is a California lawyer and an expert on Japan's Penal Code. He is an associate professor of law at Iwate University in Morioka.

He said Cleary will provide advice to Geragos and perhaps expert opinion to the court in California as to what the Japanese law says.

"And we get back to the basic point that you see in Mr. Geragos motion that because California passed this law in 2004, they think they can now prosecute Mr. Miura," the lawyer said.

Fitzgerald said their position is that California can't prosecute their client because the law operates prospectively and not retroactively.

The U.S. Supreme Court overruled the California Supreme Court in a very similar issue a few years back in which California tried to apply the law retroactively, he said.

"The really important thing right now is what's going to

happen in that court in California," Fitzgerald added.

Berline said that under the CNMI extradition law, they will

file what they are allowed to file and challenge what they are allowed to challenge.

"That is a narrow basis. How-

ever, we are not precluded from filing things in other courts that we feel are appropriate. And we are not limited by the extradition

law in that, if we feel that there is a basis to file in the district court or to appeal or to file in any other court, we can bring a motion with

merit," Berline said.

He said they certainly have the right to file a habeas corpus under the extradition statute.

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Guard pleads guilty to beating up a colleague

A security guard accused of beating up a fellow guard for calling him "master" entered a guilty plea yesterday.

Saiful Hasan, 35, pleaded guilty to assault and battery.

Superior Court Associate Judge Ramona V. Manglona accepted Hasan's plea and sentenced him to six months in prison, all suspended except for the three days he had already served.

Following the plea agreement, Hasan was given credit for the three days he had already spent in prison.

Manglona placed the defendant on probation for a period of six months and ordered him to pay a \$25 court assessment fee.

The judge required the security guard to write a letter of apology to the victim, Moham-

med Golam Sarwar.

Manglona referred Hasan to the Community Guidance Center for evaluation and to complete any recommended course of counseling treatment.

Police arrested Hasan in August 2007 for attacking Sarwar at their barracks.

Police said Sarwar, of G4S agency, suffered a small cut on the right elbow, scratches, and a contusion.

Hasan was arrested for assault with a dangerous weapon, assault and battery, and disturbing the peace.

Hasan entered a plea agreement with the government, pleading guilty to assault and battery. The remaining charges were dismissed. *(Ferdie de la Torre)*

Group asks OPA: Look into public land leases

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Taotao Tano president Gregorio Cruz Jr. has asked the Office of Public Auditor to commence an investigation into the Department of Public Lands concerning public lands leases in the Commonwealth.

"It is our firm belief that an investigation is warranted in order to justify and account for all public lands in the Commonwealth," Cruz said in his letter to Public Auditor Michael Sablan.

The Taotao Tano president said he would like OPA to investigate Public Lands' conduct in the areas of fair market value, amendment of leaseholds, contents of leaseholds in black and white vis-à-vis actual physical condition or operation and use

of public land lease by lease, temporary permits, leases of public lands right of way, land compensations, and personal interest involvements.

Also worrisome to Taotao Tano is the current moratorium on all homestead developments by the Fitial administration.

"The recent news report by the DPL Secretary, Mr. John Del Rosario, that DPL lacks the funding for development of homesteads also contradicts the administration's previous report of a \$50-million homestead project proposed in his tenure," he said.

The Taotao Tano president also took the opportunity to laud Sablan and his office for their professionalism when they audited DPL's predecessor, Marianas Public Lands Authority.



PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the "Open Government Act", the Public School System State Board of Education, through their Special Education State Advisory Panel (SESAP), is hereby serving notice to the general public that it will hold a special meeting on Wednesday, March 19, 2008, 5 pm to 8 pm, at the Annex Room, PIC, Saipan. This meeting is open to the public; interested individuals are welcome to attend.

AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order**
 - A. Welcome & Introduction
 - B. Presence of a Quorum
 - C. Adoption of Agenda
 - D. Adoption of Minutes
- II. **Updates - Mr. Tom Camacho**
 - A. Membership Update
 - B. Related Service Technician: Incentive
- III. **Training - Michael Burdge & Jean Clayton, University of Kentucky**
 - A. Requirements for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities Taking an Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Achievement Standards.

IV. Adjournment

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals who wish to attend this meeting, but require accessibility such as large print, sign language or interpreter, must call 237-3029/19. Several days' notice is necessary to allow organizers ample time to make necessary arrangements.

/s/ /s/
Frank Rabauliman
Chairperson

Suzanne W. Lizama
Acting Coordinator, Special Education

COMMUNITY BRIEFS**EMO warns of high surf today**

The Emergency Management Office issued a high surf alert yesterday, warning the public that large north swells generated by gales southeast of Japan will produce high surf on north facing reefs. The high surf advisory remains in effect until 4am Tuesday morning.

High surf advisory means that hazardous surf and dangerous rip currents will affect exposed reefs and beaches. Expect hazardous surf of 8 to 10 feet along north facing reefs. The surf is forecast to subside below hazardous levels early this morning.

EMO is strongly advising the public to stay out of the water, or avoid venturing exposed beaches especially along north facing reefs, where rip currents will be life-threatening. **(EMO)**

Early dismissal today at KHS

Parents and guardians of Kagman High School students are being informed that students will be dismissed today, March 18, at 12pm due to the teachers' Grade Quick Professional Development. For more information, call 237-3840 or 237-3832, or fax 664-3788. **(PR)**

Autism Society meeting today

The Autism Society of the CNMI will be holding its monthly meeting today, March 18, 2008, at 5:30pm, at the Herman's Bakery Conference Room. Information regarding the group and future meetings will be available at this meeting. All families and friends of children with autism are invited to attend.

For additional information, call John at 234-8803/4 or Larrisa at 322-3761 or send an email to as_cnmi@yahoo.com. **(PR)**

Zoning Board sets community outreach

The Zoning Board is holding three meetings this week to inform people about the zoning program and to take suggestions for revising the law.

- Tuesday, March 18, 6:30, Tanapag Elementary cafeteria
- Wednesday, March 19, 6:00, WSR Elementary cafeteria

Petition to graduate deadline extended

The Northern Marianas College has extended the deadline for the submission of petitions to graduate for Spring 2008. The new deadline is March 28, 2008. Any questions or concerns regarding the Spring 2008 graduation can be addressed to Rosaline Cepeda, Acting Director of the Office of Admissions and Records, at 234-5498 ext 1540 or email rosalinec@nmcnet.edu.

Live-fire training on Farallon set

The Emergency Management Office and the U.S. Naval Forces Marianas Guam said that the U.S. military would be conducting live-fire training on the island of Farallon de Mendenilla on March 17, 18, and 21, from 7am to 12am.

Due to the danger imposed by this activity, EMO is advising the public—especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators—to stay away from this area during the time and dates indicated.

For more information, contact the EMO Operations Section at telephone numbers 322-9528 and 322-9529, VHF MARINE CHNL

16, and HF Single Side Band Radio on 5.205.0. **(EMO)**

English placement tests set

The Northern Marianas College will be administering the English Placement Tests on the following dates:

- April 2, 2008 9am – 12pm Room: D-1
- April 4, 2008 4pm – 7pm Room: D-1

Bring a valid photo ID (driver's license, passport or school ID) and pencils.

There is a \$25 fee that must be paid in advance at NMC's Finance Office (M-F, 9am - 4pm). Students will not be admitted to the testing room without proof of payment. For more information, call the Languages & Humanities Dept. at (670) 234-5498 Ext. 2000 or 1242. **(NMC)**

Flame Tree Arts Festival registration opens

Registration is open March 17-April 17, 2008, for the 27th Annual Flame Tree Arts Festival. Registration forms are available at the Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture on Capital Hill, Saipan. Registration costs are \$650/food and business vendors, \$350/non-profit, \$150/artists, and \$100/information. The Flame Tree Arts Festival will be held April 24-27, 2008, at Civic Center and is Micronesia's largest annual arts and culture celebration. For more information about the Flame Tree Arts Festival, contact CCAC

at 670-322-9982/3 or e-mail marianasarts@pticom.com.

ACT sets Wednesday meeting

The CNMI Association of Commonwealth Teachers Association will have a General Membership Meeting on Wednesday, March 19, at 6pm, in the San Vicente Elementary School's cafeteria

Topics for discussion include:

- 1) Update on appointment of a Teacher's Representative to the Board of Education.
 - 2) Plans for the upcoming election of Vice-President and Secretary
 - 3) Updates on ACT activities and the Board of Education
 - 4) Needs or concerns from teachers.
- All interested members of the community are invited to attend. For information contact Betty Miller at 237-3761 or 287-2386.

Wednesday vigil marks 5th year of Iraq war

For several months now, a small group of concerned residents has gathered every Friday afternoon at the American Memorial Park to silently protest the Iraq war and pray for all who are serving in the nation's armed services.

This Wednesday, March 19, marks the fifth anniversary of the war in Iraq and the group will once more gather at the American Memorial Park from 5:30pm to 5:55pm to mark this milestone. Concerned residents are welcome to join the group.



Congratulations McDonald's Saipan on your 15th Anniversary

On this special occasion, we join hands with McDonald's Saipan to celebrate their 15th Anniversary and Mobil's long term commitment to meeting McDonald's needs through quality fuel and supply reliability.

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We're drivers too.

CNMI BOARD OF ACCOUNTANCY**NOTICE**

Governor Benigno Fitial and Lt. Governor Timothy Villagomez hereby give notice that pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 12, a regular meeting of the CNMI Board of Accountancy Board of Directors will be held on Friday, March 21, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. in the Ernst & Young Conference Room, 2nd floor Suite 209 of the Oleai Business Center. The agenda is as follows:

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL
- III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA
- IV. ADOPTION OF BOARD MINUTES OF MEETINGS
- V. VISIT BY NASBA REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE
- VI. LICENSING OF CNMI CPA'S
- VII. CPA EXAM TESTING CENTER
- VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION — Pursuant to PL 8-41 Sec 13 (b) the Board may vote to meet in Executive Session.
- X. NEW BUSINESS
- XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS
- XII. ADJOURNMENT

Advertising Feature

15 years of the Golden Arches

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
editor@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

In 1993, Vaclav Havel was elected President of the Czech Republic, Dallas defeated Buffalo in the Super Bowl, *Unforgiven* won for Clint Eastwood the Oscar award for Best Picture, the world's population stood at 5.522 billion, Michael Jordan ended his 17 month NBA retirement, and Eric Clapton's *Tears in Heaven* won the Grammy award for Record of the Year.

It was also the year when McDonald's Saipan was born, the brainchild of Saipan businessman Joe Ayuyu, who left a very promising banking job to pursue his dream of owning a franchise of the world-famous restaurant chain. With the support of his wife, Marcia, the two poured all that they had to build the foundation of a dream that is now known as one of the most robust local companies on the islands.

Today marks a significant milestone of that fateful step, as McDonald's Saipan turns 15 years old and Ayuyu, the presi-



Joe Ayuyu, the president and owner of McDonald's Saipan.

JEREMY MAXIMO

dent and owner of McDonald's Saipan, is excited at the prospect of his baby reaching such an achievement.

"Even in this time of hard eco-

nomie conditions for the CNMI, we find ourselves celebrating something instead of worrying about what is happening to our economy. What can we say, we've become teenagers and teen times are always exciting times, right?" he said, smiling. "We're very excited. Fifteen years may not sound that long but for us it's been a long and successful and, of course, challenging years for McDonald's. We'd like to think that we've grown much to becoming an adult."

Ayuyu credits much of the company's success to the legions of loyal customers that his restaurants have. "A big thank

you goes out to our customers because without them, we cannot be where we are right now. They're very loyal to McDonald's and it is our promise to them to continue to do the things that they want to see at McDonald's: the best food that they can possibly get at a reasonable price and making sure that our place is clean and a very good place for them to spend time with their friends and families."

That success has allowed the company to maintain regular operations despite the bleak economic conditions facing the CNMI. "Right now, we have about 51 employees and we're

See 15 YEARS on next page

"We're very excited. Fifteen years may not sound that long but for us it's been a long and successful and, of course, challenging years for McDonald's. We'd like to think that we've grown much to becoming an adult."

CONGRATULATIONS
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FROM THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF

**CHONG'S
CORPORATION**

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Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

MARCH 18, 2002

Hiring ban now on

Citing the need to safeguard national security, the CNMI's Department of Labor and Immigration has banned the hiring of new nonresident workers from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Chinese coming from China's Fujian Province. In a related development, the DOLI also said it will strictly enforce the deadline on the filing of applications for nonresidents' renewal of employment, saying the department would no longer accept those filed beyond the legally prescribed period.

February arrivals rebound

The CNMI tourism industry rebounded from the tragic events of 9-11 as tourist arrivals to the Commonwealth registered a 6.7-percent increase, from January's 38,699 total visitors to February's 41,280. But the continued increase in visitor arrivals to the CNMI remains below the total number of tourists that the Commonwealth played host to in February 2001, which totaled 44,178 or 6.56 percent more than last month's.

'FDM bombing violates bird treaty'

Hagatna-An American judge has ruled United States military bombing in the Northern Marianas violates a 1918 treaty protecting migratory birds, Pacific Daily News reported. Guam's Washington Delegate, Robert Underwood, told the newspaper what happens next could determine whether the military continues to view the Northern Marianas and Guam as valuable training sites.

MARCH 18, 2003

BoS elects new board officers

The Bank of Saipan has elected a new set of directors, bringing back to order what bank receiver Antonio Muna described as a formerly "chaotic" board. Ten board seats were filled Saturday in an election among the bank's majority shareholders, Muna said. Muna is ex officio member, pursuant to a court order that approved the bank's rehabilitation plan. The receiver exercises veto power over the board's decisions.

Chamber opposes higher taxes, asks NMI govt to 'tighten belt'

The CNMI's largest business organization is urging the local government not to rush into more tax increases, but instead to look at ways the government "can tighten its belt and increase efficiency." In a 12-page letter addressed to Gov. Juan N. Babauta released to the media on Friday, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce outlined its position on the Administration's Integrated Fiscal Plan.

'No displacement of local workers'

Since about 90 percent of the private sector labor force is already composed of nonresident workers, private attorney Joe Hill believes that the proposed labor policy that allows guest workers to have more than one job would not result in the displacement of local employees. "In the private sector, approximately 90 percent of positions are occupied by nonresident workers [and] only about 10 percent are occupied by local workers. That's what exists now and every worker is for only one job. So we don't think that [proposed policy] would translate to local workers being displaced or not being given preference in hiring," said Hill in an interview.

MARCH 18, 2004

Burton commits to helping NMI

Indiana congressman Daniel Burton has vowed to keep the Northern Marianas in mind in his policy solutions toward providing the highest quality of healthcare services. The chairman of the subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness made this assurance to Gov. Juan N. Babauta following the Feb. 25 hearing dubbed "Investigation into Health Care Disparities of the U.S. Pacific Island Territories" held in Washington D.C.

2 more GOP officials resign, reshuffle seen

A ranking official of the CNMI Republican Party has reportedly resigned from his post, while another will soon follow suit-the reason for the party's general membership meeting next week where it is expected to hold an election to put new officials on the board. Sources within the party said that Vicente Seman, who holds the secretary position within the board, has already tendered his resignation, while Regina Torres, who is the acting president, will follow suit.

15 YEARS

From Page 8

one of the very few companies on the island that don't lay off people. We don't cut hours on our employees and McDonald's is I think one of the favorite places for people to apply, so we're really very fortunate," he said.

In the 15 years that he's been running the business, Ayuyu said that foremost of the many insights he has gained have a lot to do with how to weather the many challenges that have come and gone.

"We've kind of matured. In the beginning, the main challenge was getting enough people to work for us, especially the kind of people that have the dedication to work in this kind of business. It involved not only learning the business but also finding employees, training employees, and keeping employees. It was a real challenge for us," he said.

These days, with majority of its staff already well trained, Ayuyu said he is facing a different kind of challenge: maintaining the high level of training of its staff. "We still do a lot of training all the time but it's a lot easier for us. I guess you can say that we're more experienced, so

we can take care of our customers a lot better."

Focus on QSCV

That hasn't taken McDonald's away from its original focus, which can be summed up in the acronym QSCV, which stands for Quality, Service, Cleanliness, and Value. This strict adherence to its original mission has required McDonald's to also adapt to the changing tastes and preference of the market, including the way they prepare food.

"Over the years, McDonald's has transitioned itself and it made a lot of changes, from preparing food ahead of time and putting it on a heating bin, to what we call 'Made For You' system. ... What this means is that, when you come to the restaurant and want to order, say a Big Mac, we will only make the sandwich when you complete placing the order. The ultimate goal here it to give you the freshest product possible," he said.

This means quick service that is second to none. "That's where training comes in. You know that McDonald's is very famous for providing quick service. Quick in terms of making sure that we still make quality food but we want to give the product to our customers as soon as we can."

See 15 YEARS on Page 13



JEREMY MAXIMO

Marcia Ayuyu, wife of Joe Ayuyu, manages the main branch of McDonald's Saipan on Middle Road.



The McDonald's branch on Middle Road has become a landmark on the island of Saipan.

JEREMY MAXIMO

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Special Board Meeting

Board of Regents Conference Room,
NMC Saipan Campus
Wednesday, March 19, 2008
3:30p.m.

AGENDA

- I. Preliminary Matters
 - A. Roll Call
- II. Public Comments/ Miscellaneous
- III. Old Business
 - A. WASC Update
 - B. Board Matters
- IV. New Business
 - A. Accreditation Recommendation 1, 2, 3, and 6 – Facilities and Education Master Plan

At any time during the scheduled meeting the Board of Regents may be required to enter into executive session to discuss matters deemed privileged and confidential.

V. Adjournment

/s/ Joey P. San Nicolas March 19, 2008
Acting Chairperson, Board of Regents Date

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Rules for spying

The process of working out a reasonable compromise on the law governing the surveillance of foreign targets has been long and painful. With the House's passage of a second version of the measure, the fight is far from over. Deep divisions remain, particularly over whether telephone companies that received official assurances that their participation in the warrantless wiretapping program was lawful should be shielded from private lawsuits. The Senate—correctly, we believe—provided such protections in its version of the measure. The House continues to reject this so-called “amnesty,” frustrating a needed compromise on a measure that President Bush will sign.

Rather than fighting over whether lawsuits over past surveillance should be allowed to proceed, lawmakers should be focused on assuring that adequate protections are in place to govern surveillance going forward. On that count, the Senate intelligence committee's chairman, John D. Rockefeller IV, D-W.Va., got it right when he described the House measure as “a step in the right direction” while noting that “considerable work remains.” Mr. Bush overstated the case when he thundered that the House measure “would cause us to lose vital intelligence on terrorist threats.”

The House bill is an improvement over the Senate measure in some ways. For instance, it clarifies that the statute sets out the exclusive authority under which such intelligence is to be gathered—preventing a future administration from repeating this administration's warrantless wiretapping. However, it has flaws that go beyond the immunity question. Its two-year sunset provision, which would cause the law to expire in the middle of the next president's first term in office, is too short. The six-year sunset in the Senate measure is too long, however; four years would be an appropriate compromise.

More fundamentally, it's not clear that the House measure strikes the right balance between giving intelligence agencies the flexibility they need to respond nimbly to new circumstances and ensuring adequate court oversight to protect the privacy rights of U.S. citizens. The Senate-passed measure envisions that such surveillance can be launched and that the court oversight will come later; the new House measure assumes that, except in emergency circumstances, the court approval will be obtained in advance. That is too constraining.

The most important consideration is whether there is searching, robust court review of the surveillance and procedures to minimize the invasion of Americans' privacy rights, whether that comes before or after the surveillance has been launched. The Senate and House should work with the administration to achieve that result. They would be wise to do so soon, before the current set of surveillance orders begins to expire in August, so that lawmakers do not find themselves once again legislating these complex issues in haste.

(c) 2008, The Washington Post



Dry hole?

Silly Season

In Formula 1 racing, baseball and other sports the time just before the new season starts is sometimes referred to as silly season. This is the time that deals are made, rumors are started, outright fabrications are floated to cause disinformation and people are hired or fired.

In the sport of U.S. politics, the silly season is upon us. The deals are being cut, territory bought and sold, wannabes are pushing, shoving, elbowing, trying to get in or trying to get out or being ground into hash as the pre-election cycle of silliness wobbles on. Rumors, fabrications, hatchet jobs and disinformation campaigns abound. Personal alignments, political favors and backroom alliances are the work of the day as primary candidates scramble for votes to keep themselves in the race for the gold ring, the U.S. Presidency.

Out of all this finagling, the American people learn who the candidates are, what they claim to stand for (as opposed to what they will really do if elected) and whether they can stand the grueling pace and hardball antics of silly season without blowing their tops.

This year's event seems about over at this point. The parade will go on until the real season opener, the Republican and Democrat conventions, convene but the die appears to be cast at this point. The only question to be asked is whether Obama and Clinton, or Clinton and Obama will face McCain in the November national election. After the dust settles and the last bamboo shoot has been driven under the electorates' fingernail we will discover what those two have realized since day one. Whichever one comes out on top, they have no chance against McCain in November unless they team up with each other and go for the special interest/special population vote as partners.

By harnessing the available minority vote and the sex-based vote the Clinbama/Obamton duad has a chance to add that to the regular vote total of voters buying in to the Democrat rhetoric. The result is an almost certain mathematical win. Not all minority voters or sex-based voters will cast a ballot for the O/C duo but enough will vote that way to push a fairly tight race over into their favor. McCain and those buying into the Republican rhetoric will be numerically outgunned and will likely go down in ignominious defeat if the C/O partnership forms.

So don't be fooled by the cat fighting, name calling and arm twisting you see now. Obama and Clinton will be fast friends and will almost surely team up as kissin' cousins, lifelong pals and natural allies as they try to get their mitts on 4 (or for them, hopefully 8) years of wielding the ultimate power and granting the ultimate favors. No amount is too much to spend; no effort is too great to get to that penultimate goal of the political animal, the White House. The Democrat convention is when you will see these two bitter “rivals” kiss and make up. Sidebar: If they win

Sour Grapes

By BRUCE BATEMAN

Special to the Saipan Tribune

Bruce A. Bateman writes *Sour Grapes* when the moon is full and the mood strikes. Stay tuned for each exciting episode. “Yes, he is opinionated.” Email: bbateman@pticom.com; Blog: <http://saipanuvian.blogspot.com/>



will they agree to “flip” positions four years from now?

■ ■ ■

How much in the well?

According to local news sources our Governor is in the process of making a contingency plan should the Legislature not pass a budget. He and his advisors will try to work out the math and figure out how to spend via a continuing resolution as we have done in all but three of the last 10 years.

He has talked of consolidating government agencies to make them more cost effective, he has proposed payless government holidays as a solution but the time for that has probably passed with nearly half of the fiscal year now gone. He has raised the specter of Austerity Fridays again, this time every week instead of every other week. He has mentioned cutting some agencies, like CUC, independently and at other times he has talked about across the board cuts. He has pointed out that mass layoffs may become necessary but has so far staved them off. I'm sure there are some other possibilities he and his team have not exposed to the light of day yet. Let's hope so.

One thing is almost certain. He will have to come up with a plan to deal with a looming problem. What do we do when the money runs out about August? We don't print our own money so just inflating the money supply while deflating the worth of the currency as autonomous countries do is not an option. As a “partner” country we can only borrow and let our kids figure out how to pay for it (so called deficit spending), or we can spend only what we have. It appears that what we have will just run out about the end of July or the beginning of August at current rates of expenditure. I am wondering what the plan will be then?

It may now be too late to stretch the available dollars over the remaining time. The original estimate of \$160 million in revenues or so appears to have been a bit high considering additional business closures and declining tax revenue. The options will become much narrower once the well has run dry. I think that is what the Governor and his staff were trying to relate in the memo message of last Friday to various department and division heads as reported over

See DRY on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Hard-won progress in Baghdad

By **ANTHONY J. DIAZ**
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

BAGHDAD, Iraq—Since I arrived here last August, I have been struck by four things: the financial commitment we have made to reconstruction; the precipitous decline in violence; the inklings of representative government; and the small yet significant progress in communal relations between the mostly Shiite Iraqi army and the predominantly Sunni residents of this area. One often reads of the chaos plaguing Iraq. Yet the media accounts only infrequently seem to grasp the successes being achieved.

My combat outpost sits along the Tigris River in a section of Baghdad known as Adhamiyah. It is enclosed by a wall that separates it from the predominantly Shiite eastern section of the city, similar to the wall that separates Catholics and Protestants in Belfast. Though a few Shiites remain within the enclosure, most have moved out, leaving a Sunni enclave surrounded by Shiite neighborhoods.

American taxpayers well know that millions of dollars were squandered on poorly scrutinized projects. Our government dumped money into quick fixes with, for too long, little regard for the culture of dependency it was breeding. But much of this has changed. Yes, sustainable job creation was not initially a priority, and working-age residents of Adhamiyah remain dangerously underemployed. But in this area we have begun to create more permanent jobs.

The efforts being carried out by Iraqis, the coalition and nongovernmental organizations focus on essential services, economic development and reconciliation. Restoring services such as electricity, a dependable sewage system, trash collection, and access to fuels and potable water are at the top of the agenda. Initiatives to bring all of these services to a satisfactory level have met with some success. The local economy has benefited from the lull in violence. Market areas that were once desolate are teeming with life, consumers are out and shops are open. Coalition initiatives to develop local market councils and provide micro-grants and micro-loans to small-business owners are providing a much-needed economic spark to Baghdad's neighborhoods.

The troop surge has contributed more soldiers to this small but critical area of Baghdad. But the building of the Adhamiyah wall, coupled with the sea change in the population's attitude toward the coalition, also contributed greatly to the decline in violence. And our squadron's ability to capitalize on these changes has been equally powerful. Building a local security force has been a slow, painful process. The people's change in attitude toward the coalition has led to more citizens providing soldiers with information on crime suspects and potential locations of roadside explosives and weapons caches. All these things have shaped the successes we are seeing daily.

Late last year, I witnessed something inspirational in a rather unlikely setting: an ordinary neighborhood advisory council meeting. Attendance was the highest I had yet seen, with about 40 prominent locals present. The coalition was represented by our squadron commander, a few colonels from the embedded provincial reconstruc-

tion team and a political officer from the U.S. Embassy. Discussions ranged from the persistent lack of electricity to sewage problems to economic development. What struck me were the comments of some Sunni workers from the district's power station, who came to complain that the (mostly Shiite) Iraqi army had mistreated them and accused them of distorting the distribution of electric power, something over which these workers have little control. The men said they would strike until they received better treatment and pleaded with the council chairman, a Sunni, for help. That was an unlikely outcome, given the entrenched animosity between Shiites and Sunnis and the lack of substantive political reconciliation even at the highest levels of government here. But these men did something many Americans would take for granted: They voiced grievances and sought assistance. These are the seeds of representative government, citizens coming forth and demanding change from their representatives. Much work remains to be done, but we have clearly made a start.

Even the Iraqi army has taken a turn for the better here. Not long ago its troops were seen as an obstacle to reconciliation and were

accused of arresting locals without evidence, only to request ransoms for their release. There are still occasional incidents of graft and abuse, but now Iraqi troops provide security and make efforts to build rapport with the populace.

Through continuous prodding, our squadron has influenced the local army contingent's understanding of the values of civil affairs. One particularly adept Iraqi captain has coordinated numerous efforts to hand out humanitarian assistance, organized medical and dental missions in local schools, provided security for deliveries of much-needed fuel, and even delivered wheelchairs himself.

There is still much left to be accomplished in Iraq. But the successes of the men and women serving in this once explosive area of Baghdad cannot be overstated. Sitting here in Adhamiyah, one thing is certain: The surge has worked.

The writer, a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserve, recently received a master's degree in strategic studies and international economics from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Letters to the Editor

NMI residency?

Two "consultants" met last week with several Filipinos to discuss an offer of CNMI "residency." The meeting was held in top secrecy, but of course, word got out. Another expanded meeting is planned for Thursday where they will invite a couple Chinese and Bangladeshis, too. All of this will be followed by press conference to highlight the new NMI residency development.

This is another ploy to stall federalization. What started out as a good idea by a CNMI legislator has evolved into a scheme to manipulate guest workers and defeat federalization legislation. Consultants have tried to concoct a plan that would stall U.S. intervention and assistance with our labor and immigration.

I have many concerns and questions. Do these consultants (one unpaid by her own admission) speak for the NMI government? Do these attorneys speak for local people and the 16th Legislature? Can any state or territory offer residency? How long will the residency last? If you can offer a deal with one signature from the governor, can't you change the deal with another signature? Would you trust architects of Public Law 15-108? Why would anyone be offered a deal now? Do several unelected Filipinos speak for our diverse workforce? Is the CNMI planning a lawsuit against the U.S., as Siemer claimed? Is this a stall so greedy Chamber members can bleed every buck out of the local populace for three or four more years while they attempt a court action against the U.S.?

One of the consultants picked a small group to unveil this plan. She then held PL-15-108 over the head of several already stressed Filipinos and offered a compromise...NMI foreign residency status. Historically, it is not wise to negotiate out of fear and weakness. P.L. 15-108 hangs like a guillotine over CNMI guest workers and over the small group at this meeting. The implied threat is sign our new residency deal or you will be sent home, or to quote one soldier, "Do we want status or do we want to help our family?" As Lyndon Johnson said, "You do not examine legislation in light of the benefits it will convey if properly administered, but in light of the wrongs it would do and the harms it would cause if

improperly administered."

If the two attorneys are, in fact, speaking for our local Legislature, would it not show more sincerity to guest workers to repeal P.L. 15-108 first, and then discuss a new NMI residency plan? In fact, I would suggest scrapping the Island Slave Law and using a better plan for the transitional period. This would ease suffering to workers and business caused by change.

It is a myth outside the NMI that locals are against federalization and guest workers are pro. Many surveys, including the *Saipan Tribune's* and local Rep. Joe Camacho's, show overwhelming support from the indigenous populace. Guest workers that have been involved with immigration fraud and operate businesses that would be deemed illegal by the feds are against U.S. intervention. If our government wants to hire lawyers and lobbyists, wouldn't the money be better spent lobbying the U.S. to insist local Chamorro and Carolinians working in labor and immigration will be retained as U.S. federal employees? This would bring a wealth of economic development to the cash strapped commonwealth. No one here wants locals replaced by mainland U.S. federal employees. Our local citizens are more experienced with our unique position. Affirmative action has been used effectively in the past and will be important here to retain locals in U.S. government jobs. The CNMI immigration has conscious immigration officers making about 20k per year and this qualification and experience should be paid substantially higher under U.S. labor and immigration. I would like to see our government cooperate with the U.S. in working to support our local residents instead of hiring lobbyists to protect big business. The economic uncertainty here has caused much stress in a time where we need patience most. Hardship will not end the day federalization passes and we can be sure the struggle for social justice began long before Rosa Parks was born and will continue long after Wendy Doromal is gone.

Ron Hodges
Puerto Rico, Saipan

DRY

From Page 10

the weekend. The options become, shut down overall operations until the new fiscal year starts in October or try to shuffle remaining funds into a few really vital services. Either way they are holding each agency individually accountable, so goes the message from the Administration.

Just like families, governments can only expend what they take in over the long haul. So far, over the years our government has managed to run the deficit to just over one full year's income*. This administration has not added to it, so far. Lets hope they keep it that way.

*(This figure does not include "unfunded liabilities"—mostly from the Retirement Fund—which increases that total deficit owing to the equivalent of many years of total income). See Bill Stewart's excellent series of articles recapping and recounting the woes of the Retirement Fund over the years in excruciating detail.

Quotes of the week: There are advantages to being elected President. The day after I was elected, I had my high school grades classified Top Secret.

—Ronald Reagan, 40th US President (1911 – 2004)

I don't care who does the electing as long as I get to do the nominating.

—Boss Tweed, Tammany Hall Democrat (1823 – 1878)

Dear community of Saipan:

We live in an island paradise. We have beautiful beaches, warm colorful lagoons and balmy weather with lush tropical jungles showcasing the mountains of Saipan. We have much to offer. And the past two weeks, we played host to more than 100 off island athletes. These athletes—from Australia, Japan, Korea, Switzerland, the U.S., and even Russia—were here to compete in the 7th XTERRA Saipan Championships as well as the 19th Saipan Tagaman Triathlon. Some of the participants did both races. There were major sponsors, most notably the Marianas Visitors Bureau, Coca Cola (Subway, Foremost, Glimpses of Saipan), PTI, DFS Galleria, the Pacific Islands Club, and Northwest Airlines. There were a myriad of other companies that participated on a much smaller scale but all of these companies helped to produce a fantastic week of sports and fellowship.

Aside from the businesses that supported TAGA, Inc. financially and with in-kind contributions, the Saipan community, and the

Hafa Adai spirit, left an indelible mark on all of the participants. Everyone who was here for either or both of the events went away saying that they want to come back next year and they want to tell all their friends about this wonderfully kept secret that is Saipan.






Well, we do not want Saipan to be a secret anymore. This is our home and we should let everyone know what a wonderful home it is. We want more people to come and participate next year in the Saipan Sportsfest and tell everyone about these great races and the people who helped to make it happen. And we want some of the international news on Saipan to be positive and inspirational. So to all those volunteers who came out to direct runners and bikers, and those who manned feed stations and aid stations, and showered the participants with Saipan hospitality, I give you a hearty thank you. Events like this cannot take place without the support of the community.

Wolf Mojica
President, TAGA, Inc.

Sattelite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲ 81° ▼ 75°	▲ 81° ▼ 75°	▲ 81° ▼ 75°	▲ 81° ▼ 73°	▲ 80° ▼ 74°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Partly Sunny	▲ 84 ▼ 76
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲ 86 ▼ 78
Yap	Cloudy	▲ 86 ▼ 77
Chuuk	Showers	▲ 88 ▼ 79
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	▲ 83 ▼ 75
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	▲ 86 ▼ 75
Majuro	Partly Sunny	▲ 85 ▼ 75

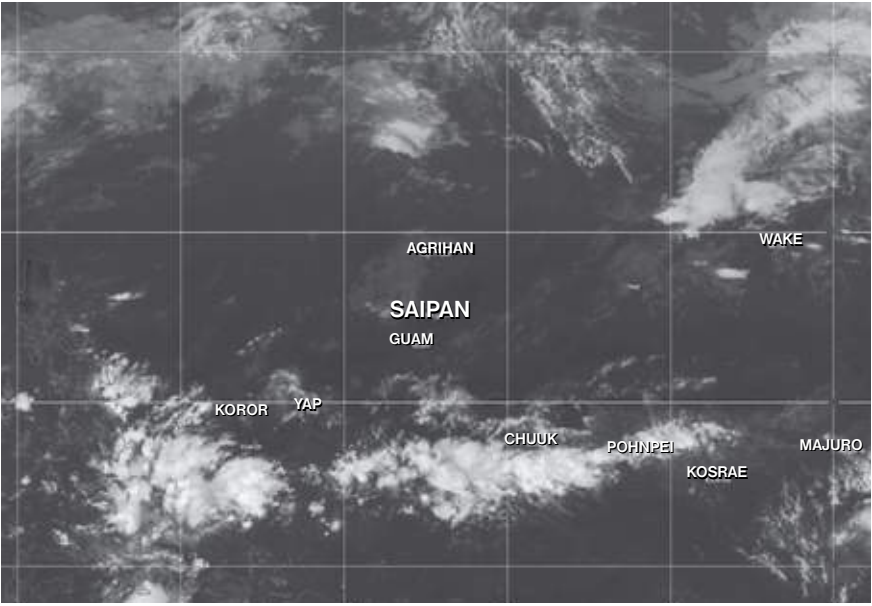
Around The Globe

Auckland	Mostly Sunny	▲ 73 ▼ 58
Beijing	Showers	▲ 61 ▼ 25
Hong Kong	Cloudy	▲ 79 ▼ 70
Honolulu	Showers	▲ 78 ▼ 71
London	Cloudy	▲ 46 ▼ 37
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	▲ 71 ▼ 53
Manila	Cloudy	▲ 88 ▼ 75
Melbourne	Partly Sunny	▲ 84 ▼ 56
Miami	Mostly Sunny	▲ 83 ▼ 70
New York	Cloudy	▲ 48 ▼ 39
Osaka	Sunny	▲ 61 ▼ 44
Paris	Cloudy	▲ 47 ▼ 32
Pusan	Sunny	▲ 64 ▼ 43
Rome	Showers	▲ 62 ▼ 48
Salem	Showers	▲ 55 ▼ 38
San Francisco	Partly Sunny	▲ 63 ▼ 48
Seoul	Partly Sunny	▲ 64 ▼ 36
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲ 61 ▼ 46
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	▲ 49 ▼ 43

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
06:25AM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
11:55AM Today	Low Tide:	1.1 Feet
04:48AM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2008
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A weak shear line east of the Marianas extends northeastward from 12N145E to 20N157E then continues as a trough to 25N155E. Isolated showers are occurring within 40 miles of the shear line and trough. A shear line runs from 17N156E to 16N160E to the south of Wake Island at 18N167E to 18N180. Extensive cloudiness and scattered showers are found along and up to 450 miles north of the shear line. Trade-wind convergence is triggering scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms within 150 miles of a line from 5N130E to 5N150E to 8N166E. This area includes south of Koror and Yap, Chuuk and southwest of Kwajelein. Trade-wind convergence is associated with scattered showers and a few thunderstorms within an area bounded by EQ165E to 8N173E to 8N180 to 5N180 to EQ173E then back to EQ165E. This area includes east of Majuro and Tarawa.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:23AM	6:28PM
Wednesday	6:22AM	6:28PM
Thursday	6:21AM	6:28PM
Friday	6:21AM	6:28PM
Saturday	6:20AM	6:28PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	03:28PM	03:45AM
Wednesday	04:22PM	04:27AM
Thursday	05:13PM	05:06AM
Friday	06:03PM	05:42AM
Saturday	06:51PM	06:18AM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

- PICTURES**
 - ISLAND SNAPSHOTS Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
 - BIRTHDAY GREETINGS A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
 - BUSINESS Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
 - SAMUT SARI Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
 - TRAVELOGUE Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.
- ANNOUNCEMENTS**
 - COMMUNITY BRIEFS

- Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

- For pictures:**
- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
 - Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
 - Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
 - Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
 - For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.
- For announcements:**
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when),

- the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

POLICY

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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MARCH 16, 2008

DEPARTURES	ARRIVALS
Saipan-Rota CO 9313 8:30am 9:05am 3,4,7	Rota-Saipan CO 9598 11:10am 11:45am 1,2,6
Saipan-Guam CO9317 4:00am 4:50am Daily CO9597 8:30am 9:20am 1,2,5,6 CO9313 8:30am 10:00am 3,4,7 via Rota CO9601 12:30pm 1:20pm Daily CO9603 3:30pm 4:20pm Daily CO9605 6:30pm 7:20pm Daily CO9599 9:30pm 10:20pm Daily	Guam-Saipan CO 9316 2:30am 3:20am Daily CO9596 7:00am 7:50am Daily CO9598 10:15am 11:45am 1,2,6 via Rota CO9600 10:45am 11:35am 3,4,5,7 CO9602 2:00pm 2:50pm Daily CO9604 5:00pm 5:50pm Daily CO9606 8:00pm 8:50pm Daily
Saipan-Narita NW 078 8:25am 1:30pm Daily via Nagoya NW 075 4:50pm 7:30pm Daily	Narita-Saipan NW 076 10:35am 3:05pm Daily NW 077 6:15pm 1:10am+1 Daily via Nagoya
Saipan-Osaka NW 083 4:20pm 7:10pm Daily	Osaka-Saipan NW 084 10:30am 3:05pm Daily
Saipan-Nagoya NW 078 8:40am 11:25am Daily	Nagoya-Saipan NW 077 9:00pm 1:25am+1 Daily
Saipan-Manila CO 895 4:45pm 6:35pm 6 CO 895 6:45pm 8:35pm 3	Manila-Saipan CO 890 9:15am 2:55pm 6 CO 890 11:45am 5:35pm 3
Saipan-Seoul OZ 604 2:10am 6:00am 1 OZ 604 2:40am 6:30am 2,3,4,5,6,7 OZ 606 3:30pm 7:00pm 2,4,6,7	Seoul-Saipan OZ 605 9:00am 2:30pm 2,4,6,7 OZ 603 7:40pm 1:00am+1 7 OZ 603 8:10pm 1:30am+1 1,2,3,4,5,6
Saipan-Busan OZ 608 4:00am 7:35am 1,4,5,7	Busan-Saipan OZ 607 9:30pm 2:50am+1 3,4,6,7
Saipan-Guanzhou CZ 3008 5:00am 8:00am 2,6	Guanzhou-Saipan CZ 3007 8:00pm 4:00am+1 1,5
Guam-Manila CO 891 6:00am 10:30am 3 via Yap and Koror CO 893 6:30am 8:05am 6 CO 893 8:25am 10:00am 2,7 CO 893 5:50pm 9:10pm 5 via Koror CO 933 7:00pm 8:40pm Daily PR 111 6:00am 7:45am 1,2,4,6,7	Manila-Guam CO 894 11:20am 4:55pm 2,7 CO 894 7:45pm 1:20am+1 6 CO 892 9:45pm 6:30am+1 3 via Koror and Yap CO 892 10:10pm 5:30am+1 5 via Koror CO 934 10:55pm 4:30am+1 Daily PR 110 10:15pm 4:00am+1 1,3,5,6,7
Guam-Hongkong CO 909 6:50pm 9:35pm 1,5	Hongkong-Guam CO 910 10:35pm 5:15am+1 1,5
Guam-Rota CO 9598 10:15am 10:45am 1,2,6	Rota-Guam CO 9313 9:30am 10:00am 3,4,7

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana; MU: China Eastern
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency	Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota				FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 100 7:00am 7:30am Daily				FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 100 7:50am 8:20am Daily				FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:00am 9:30am Daily				FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:50am 10:15am Daily				Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
Guam-Rota				FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 300 4:00pm 4:30pm Daily				FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 300 4:50pm 5:25pm Daily				FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 400 6:00pm 6:30pm Daily				FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 400 6:45pm 7:15pm Daily				FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian				FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 101 6:45am 6:55am Daily				FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 103 7:30am 7:40am Daily				FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 105 8:00am 8:10am Daily				FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 107 8:40am 8:50am Daily				FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily
FRE 109* 9:10am 9:20am Daily							
FRE 111* 10:45am 10:55am Daily							



NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

15 YEARS

From Page 9

Coupled with the staff's friendly and courteous disposition, customers at McDonald's are always assured of a high level of service that has become the standard in the industry, Ayuyu said.

The cleanliness with which McDonald's has become known for it still a mantra that everyone faithfully adheres to. "We have dedicated people to make sure that McDonald's is as clean as it can be [and] the environment is well-maintained," Ayuyu said.

This obsession with cleanliness is something that the company does not cut corners with, he stressed, even in times of hard economic times. "A lot of people are cutting back, shutting down the air conditioners and not taking care of the facilities. But to me, to be successful in this kind of business, we need to be on top of everything. So even on landscaping, I spend a lot of money to make sure that the environment around my restaurants are always appealing and attractive."

Value is also another factor that keeps McDonald's customers loyal. Despite the depressed economic climate, McDonald's continues to offer its Value Menu... the Dollar Menu, which continue to be very popular. "With our Dollar Menu, we're telling all our customers that you don't really need that much money to come to McDonald's. Everybody can

afford to come to McDonald's, that's the whole idea."

Healthy food choices

The worldwide chain has not been immune to current trends toward healthier food choices and, as part of its effort to meet customer demands, has adjusted accordingly with a line of products that cater to the health-conscious.

"McDonald's is fully aware of the demands for a more healthy food choices. That's the reason why McDonald's has come up with a really good line of salads, and in McDonald's we now have Premium Salads (Caesar's, Asian, and Bacon Ranch) and the side salads. We're looking at about six to seven kinds of salads that are available at McDonald's," said Ayuyu.

He emphasized, though, that the key to a healthy life is not just good nutrition but also regular exercise. "No matter what you eat, too much of anything, if you don't exercise, then your health is not going to be good," Ayuyu said.

New products

McDonald's Saipan has also started to introduce a new line of products this year. Some of the new products that are now being offered at both branches are the Snack Wrap, the McSkillet, the Cinnamon Melt, and a new line of coffee that is fast becoming popular among the island's coffee addicts.

"There's more exciting things that will be happening in the coffee area as we are introducing a

new line, hopefully this year or early next year," Ayuyu said.

Next 15 years

With the 15-year milestone behind it, what's in store for McDonald's Saipan in the next 15 years?

"Right now, we're happy with our two restaurants. I think that we have the right number of stores that can serve this community," said Ayuyu.

He's not ruling out the idea, though, of opening more stores on the islands, once the economy starts picking up. "If the economy and the population were to grow, then there's always that possibility of growing, of opening a new restaurant but at this point, that remains to be seen."

There were plans of opening new branches, back when the economy was still going strong but that has been shelved, at least for the moment. "Of course, once the future starts looking bright, then we'll have to go back and revisit the plan and take it out again and take a look at it."

The secret to his success?

"I think it all comes together when you do things like providing quality food, providing a clean environment, a good atmosphere for people to go to, and, of course, the service that you provide is friendly and courteous and the thing that a lot of customers value is the pricing of our products," he concluded.



Congratulations to
McDonald's
Saipan on your
15th Anniversary!

From the management and staff of



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A TanHoldings Company

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Hagatna, Guam 96932
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CONGRATULATIONS TO McDONALD'S SAIPAN ON YOUR 15TH ANNIVERSARY!

FROM THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF



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MP 96951
Tel. (670) 532-2266
Fax (670) 532-7267

Ayuyu's pride and joy: His employees

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
editor@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Here's a quick quiz: Which fast food restaurant on the island employs Apple, Florie, Cynthia, Geraldine, and Sheryll?

If you are a regular customer of McDonald's, this should be a cinch. These are the individuals who man the drive-thru at any of the two McDonald's outlets on Saipan. Their faces and names have become as familiar as the great food that one can get at McDonald's any day of the week.

The fact that one becomes familiar with the food servers at McDonald's speaks a lot about the very low employee turnover rate at the restaurant and the dedication of the company in terms of acquiring and keeping well-trained workers. And nobody is prouder of his employees than Joe Ayuyu, the owner and president of McDonald's Saipan.

"To me, that's a big accomplishment for us. The testimony to that is this beautiful lady over here," said Ayuyu, pointing at Ana Olaes, the company's administration and marketing assistant. "She's been with us since forever," laughed Ayuyu. "I think I can already adopt her."

His secret? "I think a lot of it has to do with not only doing the job that we have to do but relationships," he stressed. "You know, working together and creating an atmosphere of teamwork. That's very important to me."

At the same time, Ayuyu emphasizes that everyone has an important role in the company, whether it is making or serving the food, to cleaning the restrooms and the store's surroundings.

"I always say to the employees that the job of the person cleaning the lobby and mopping the floor is as important as the job of the president of the company," he said.

At the same time, communication is key, he said. "I always spend time with all of my employees. If I go to the restaurant, I always make it a point to greet the employees because communication between employees is very, very important. I want them to feel that they're a part of the team."

Everybody has a role to perform, he said, but it's not just a matter of ordering people around. "We have to work together," he said.

McDonald's Saipan currently has about 51 employees. Majority are full-time workers but some are also high school and college students who are working part-time.

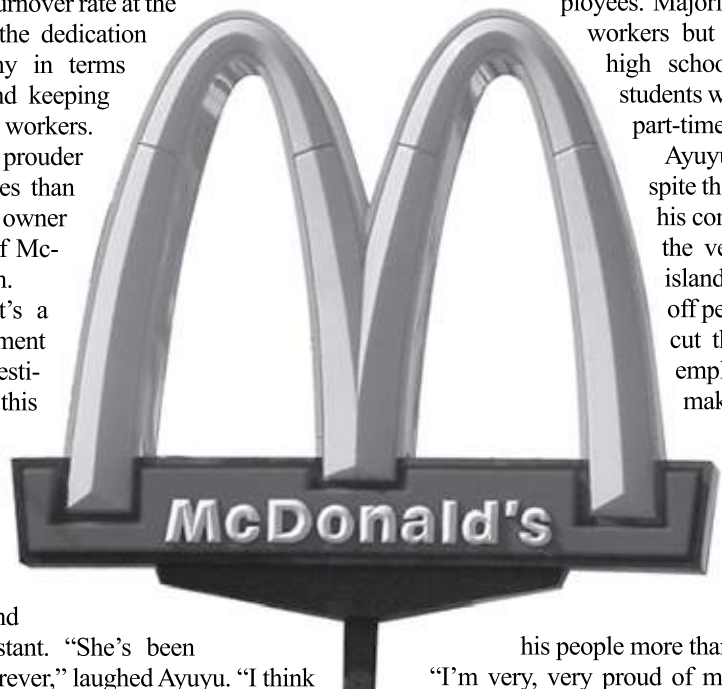
Ayuyu said that, despite the bad economy, his company is one of the very few on the island that hasn't laid off people and hasn't cut the hours of its employees, which makes it one of the favorite places for people to apply.

No employer, however, could be prouder of

his people more than Ayuyu.

"I'm very, very proud of my employees. I think they are the most outstanding employees in the Commonwealth and I'm proud of them. As a matter of fact, I'm very excited because they do a very good job and it's them that actually make the business grow," beamed Ayuyu.

"Our employees have matured a lot in the business. I'd like to say that they provide the best service on the island. They're very knowledgeable. We empower them to do what it takes for them to satisfy the customers," he added.



The staff of McDonald's Saipan main branch.
JEREMY MAXIMO

The staff of McDonald's Saipan Garapan branch.
JEREMY MAXIMO



THE PRIDE OF MCDONALD'S

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH: 1997

MAIN STORE
Cepeda, Christian
Miranda, Elma
Daliva, Crisanta
Achas, Narlou
Achas, Charlie
Bulan, Maria
Babia, Lorna
Achas, Marvin
Nacar, Romeo

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR:

Bulan, Maria

GARAPAN EXPRESS
Gutierrez, Editha
Ramos, Jocelyn
Achas, Joseph
Lasona, Josue
Bangot, Lornet

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR:

Gutierrez, Editha

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH: 1998

MAIN STORE
Achas, Sergio
Regacho, Jennifer
Regacho, Vivian
Mansay, Zenaida
Tolentino, Pearl
Badajos, Jager
Espinosa, Jason
Gopez, Frances
Nepaial, Keisha
Babia, Lorna
Elecho, Delfina

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR:

Badajos, Jager

GARAPAN EXPRESS
Achas, Joseph
Ramos, Jocelyn
Lasona, Josue
Lizama, Marvin

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR:

Achas, Joseph

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER/YEAR: 1999

MAIN
Liquiran, Julian Jr.
Achas, Charlie
Elecho, Delfina

Daliva, Crisanta

GARAPAN
Dabu, Josephine
Lizama, Marvin
Beketaut, Ngebad
Ramos, Jocelyn

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER/YEAR: 2001

MAIN
Crisanta Daliva
Joseph Achas
Charlie Achas
Manny Corpuz

GARAPAN
Glaissen Rose Castro
Narlou Achas
Josue Lasona
Larigie Achas

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER/YEAR: 2002

MAIN
Aldan, Gilbert
Pagcu, Myrna
Michael Achas
Joseph Achas

GARAPAN
Dino, Cynthia
Balbuena, Ilvin
Michael Igros
Narlou Achas

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER/YEAR: 2003

MAIN
Gutierrez, Marcelo
Liquiran, Julian Jr.
Balisalisa, Arnold
Balbuena, Arlene

GARAPAN
Achas, Jeraldine
Achas, Florie
Camacho, Reynaldo
Achas, Larigie

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER: 2004

MAIN
Mariano, Chris
Aldan, Tyrone
Vinluan, Robelyn
Achas, St. Micheal

GARAPAN
Aizon, Eric
Forbes, Fely
Mikehl, Liwihna

Larigie, Achas

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR 2004

Tyrone, Aldan
Eric, Aizon

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER: 2005

MAIN
Kisina Hossain
Myrna Pagcu
Arlene Balbuena
Kenneth Achas

GARAPAN
MD Monir Hossain
Florie Achas
Cynthia Dino
Ilvin Balbuena

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR 2005

Myrna Pagcu
Florie Achas

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER: 2006

MAIN
Muna, Apple Pearl
Dela Rosa, Gissel
Cuengco, Conrad
Gapor, Gil

GARAPAN
Cristobal, Joyce
Monir, Hossain
Dino, Cynthia
Achas, Jeraldine

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR 2006

Apple Pearl Muna
MD Monir Hossain

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER: 2007

MAIN
Balisalisa, Arnold
Armintia, Jason
San Nicolas, Josie
Jones, Julieta

GARAPAN
Moritz, Jayvee
Gutierrez, Marcelo
Macaranas, Shiela
Jain, Jaynor

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR 2007

San Nicolas, Josie
Macaranas, Shiela

SPECIAL PROMO

McDonald's Saipan turns 15 years old today and the company has lined up several special promos to mark this significant milestone and to thank its loyal customers for their continued patronage.

For breakfast, customers who purchase a Breakfast Meal will get a free Cinnamon Melt.

For lunch and dinner, customers will get—for free—any sandwich of your choice for every Extra Value Meal purchased.

Every Happy Meal and Mighty Kids Meal purchased will also en-

title customers to a free Ice Cream Sundae.

Ana Olaes, the company's administration and marketing assistant, said that this promo actually started on Saturday, March 15, and will run for only four days until today, March 18.

"This is just our simple way of saying thank you to our customers who have always been there for us and has continued to support us throughout the years," said Joe Ayuyu, president and owner of McDonald's Saipan. **(Jayvee Vallejara)**

Business

JPMorgan to buy Bear for \$236.2M

NEW YORK (AP)—JPMorgan Chase said Sunday it will acquire rival Bear Stearns for a bargain-basement \$236.2 million—or \$2 a share—a stunning collapse for one of the world's largest and most storied investment banks.

The last-minute buyout was aimed at averting a Bear Stearns bankruptcy and a spreading crisis of confidence in the global financial system.

The Federal Reserve and the U.S. government swiftly approved the all-stock deal, showing the urgency of completing the deal before world markets opened. Early indications, though, pointed to continued fear about the stability of the U.S. market, as the dollar hit fresh record lows against the euro, gold broke through \$1,015 an ounce and Asian stocks sank.

"This is going to go down in very historic terms," said Peter Dunay, chief investment strategist for New York-based Meridian Equity Partners. "This is about credit being overextended, and how bad it is for major financial institutions and for individuals. This is why we're probably heading into a recession."

The Fed will provide special financing to JPMorgan Chase for the deal, JPMorgan Chase said. The central bank has agreed to fund up to \$30 billion of Bear Stearns' less liquid assets. Meanwhile, JPMorgan said it will guarantee all business—such as trading and investment banking—until Bear Stearns' shareholders

Fed takes new steps to ease credit crisis

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Federal Reserve, in an extraordinarily rare weekend move, took bold action Sunday evening to provide cash to financially squeezed Wall Street investment houses, a fresh effort to prevent a spreading credit crisis from sinking the U.S. economy.

The central bank approved a cut in its lending rate to financial institutions to 3.25 percent from 3.50 percent, effective immediately, and created another lending facility for big investment banks to secure short-term loans. The new lending facility will be available to big Wall Street firms on Monday.

"These steps will provide financial institutions with greater assurance of access to funds," Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke told reporters in a brief conference call Sunday evening.



AP
Bear Stearns' headquarters overlooks the flag for neighboring JP Morgan Chase headquarters in New York on Friday, March 14, 2008.

approve the deal, which is expected to be completed during the second quarter.

JPMorgan Chase Chief Financial Officer Michael Cavanaugh did not say what would happen to Bear Stearns' 14,000 employees worldwide or whether the Bear Stearns name would survive. He told analysts and investors on a conference call that JPMorgan was most interested in buying Bear Stearns' prime brokerage business, which completes trades for big investors such as hedge funds.

Risky bets on securities tied to subprime mortgages—loans given to customers with poor credit history—crippled Bear Stearns, the nation's fifth-largest investment bank. So far, global banks have written down some \$200 billion worth of securities slammed amid the credit crisis.

The Fed acted just after JP Morgan Chase & Co. agreed to buy rival Bear Stearns Cos for \$236.2 million in a deal that represents a stunning collapse for one of the world's largest and most venerable investment banks. Just on Friday the Fed had raced to provide emergency financing to cash-strapped Bear Stearns through JP Morgan. Days earlier the Fed announced a set of other unconventional steps to thaw out a credit market in danger of freezing shut.

The new lending facility—described as a cousin to the Fed's emergency lending "discount window" for banks—is geared to give investment houses a source of short-term cash on a regular basis—if they need it.

It will be in place for at least six months and "may be extended as conditions warrant," the Fed said.

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Nation

ACROSS THE NATION

Vehicle pileup in snow kills 2 in Ariz.

PHOENIX (AP)—Dozens of vehicles collided in heavy, blinding snow on a northern Arizona interstate Sunday, killing at least two people, critically injuring 11 others and forcing police to close the highway for 20 miles in both directions. The low visibility on Interstate 40 near Flagstaff caused about 20 collisions, which occurred over a stretch of highway at least 4 miles long around noon, Flagstaff Fire Department Chief Mark Wilson said. While the state public safety department said three people were killed, Wilson said there were two. Neither could immediately clear up the confusion. Wilson said 15 people had to be extracted from their vehicles with hydraulic equipment or hand tools. He said 52 patients, 11 of them critical, were taken to Flagstaff Medical Center. He said four were in surgery Sunday evening.

Vast storm damage to parks in Northwest

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP)—Winter storms have devastated the Pacific Northwest's popular national parks each of the past two years, causing damage that has run into the millions of dollars. After last year's enormous repair effort in nearby Mount Rainier National Park, the major repairs this year are taking place in Olympic National Park, which offers visitors miles of Pacific coast in addition to craggy alpine peaks and forested lowlands. But while Olympic is the focus of the major storm repairs this year, teams also have new damage to fix at Mount Rainier and North Cascades national parks, hopefully before summer visitors arrive. This season's biggest storm struck in the first week of December, pouring more than 10 inches of rain on some areas in 24 hours. Two people were killed, dozens were stranded in flooded homes, thousands were left without power.

Audit: Bush barely trims FOIA backlog

WASHINGTON (AP)—Despite ordering improvements more than two years ago, President Bush has barely made a dent in the huge backlog of unanswered requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

At the same time, an audit by the National Security Archive found that Bush has provided citizens someone to talk to about how long it is going to take to get the government records they want or to be turned down.

The archive, a private research group at The George Washington University, released its seventh audit Sunday of the 1967 law that gives people the power to request information from federal govern-

ment files. The audit of 90 government agencies found mixed results from Bush's executive order on Dec. 14, 2005, to agencies to clear the backlog and be more responsive to requesters.



Bush

"Behind its ambitious facade, the order lacked both carrot and stick," the audit said, because it provided no additional money to do the job and no way to force agencies to set substantial goals or step up their efforts if they fell short.

"Many of the same old scoff-law agencies are still shirking their responsibilities to the public," said Tom Blanton, director of the archive, whose FOIA audits are funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Obama, Clinton teams trade barbs

CHICAGO (AP)—Strategists for the campaigns of Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton exchanged calculated barbs Sunday over accountability and ethics and who is engaging in personal attacks.

Obama communications director Robert Gibbs called on Clinton to release full post-White House tax returns; disclose all congressional "earmarks," or pet projects she had inserted into spending bills; and release all documents on the Clinton Foundation and Clinton Library, including a list of donors.

"What is lurking in those documents?" Gibbs asked as the two campaigns had dueling phone conference calls with reporters.

"There are gaps that need to be filled," said senior Obama strategist David Axelrod.

"This is a tried and true technique of the Obama campaign that has repeatedly shifted negative when they find the momentum working against them," said senior Clinton strategist Mark Penn. He suggested the Obama campaign was trying to "deflect public opinion from their losses in Ohio and Texas" and faced with Clinton strength in Pennsylvania.

Obama was heading for Pennsylvania on Monday to campaign, with stops later in the week likely in North Carolina and Oregon. Clinton prepared to give a speech on the Iraq war on Monday in Washington.

3 still missing in NYC crane collapse

NEW YORK (AP)—Rescuers dug through debris Sunday for three people still missing in the rubble and wreckage left when a construction crane toppled like a tree across a city block and killed at least four construction workers.

Among the missing were two workers and a woman who was staying in an apartment at a townhouse flattened by the crane.

"Each passing hour, things get a little more grim," Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta said. Twenty-four others were injured, including 11 first responders, said Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Eight remained hospitalized Sunday, officials said.

The crane rose 19 stories and was attached to an apartment tower under construction when it broke away Saturday and toppled like a tree onto buildings as far as a block away.

On Sunday, crews continued to remove pieces of the crane and piles of debris from the damaged buildings as neighborhood residents and a Manhattan borough official raised concerns about city inspections at the apartment tower.

"I warned the Buildings Department on March 4 that it was not sufficiently braced against the building," said Bruce Silberblatt, a retired contractor and vice president of the Turtle Bay Neighborhood Association.

Retired ironworker Kerry Walker, who with his wife lived in the top-floor apartment of the four-story townhouse and left minutes before the collapse, had complained that the crane appeared dangerously unstable, his stepson said.

"He knows all about cranes and said this one had no braces, everything was too minimal," John Viscardi said. "He told one friend on the phone that 'if you don't hear from me, it's because the crane fell on my house.'"

City officials said the crane was inspected Friday. At day later, it was being lengthened with a new section, a process known as "jumping," when it fell.

Bloomberg said mechanical failure or human error may have caused the accident. "As far as we can tell, all procedures that were called for were being followed," he said.



Construction workers climb around a section of collapsed crane that protrudes from a crushed building on 50th Street near Second Avenue in New York, Sunday, March 16, 2008.

Atlanta tornado's damage hurts business



Aerial photo of damaged buildings just east side of downtown Atlanta, Saturday, March 15, 2008, after a tornado hit the city Friday night.

ATLANTA (AP)—Crews on Sunday cleaned up the city's tornado-ravaged downtown as officials at hotels wondered when the shuttered convention center would reopen and bring back the millions of dollars in revenue it helps generate.

Since Friday night's storm cut a six-mile path through downtown Atlanta, the Georgia World Congress Center lost the Atlanta Home Show, a dental convention and much

of the Southeastern Conference basketball tournament.

The city's main convention center—which includes the 3.9 million square-foot convention center, the Georgia Dome and Centennial Olympic Park—and two major hotels were hobbled just as the convention season began.

The tornado ripped through the roof of an exhibition hall in one building, leaving light

fixtures and awnings dangling and exposed as workers continued to clear the scattered insulation, metal, glass and other debris littering the facility.

"The critical part is what you can't see," the executive director of the center, Dan Graveline, said of the damage. "That takes some time."

On a walking tour of the center with Gov. Sonny Perdue, Graveline said crews were working to assess the damage. Graveline said he was hopeful repairs would begin soon, starting with the areas that could be fixed most quickly.

The governor expressed relief and gratitude for the minimal loss of life and quick response of emergency workers.

Ed Walls, general manager of the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel, which was damaged by the tornado, estimated that about 30 percent of the hotel's business came from events related to the facility.

Walls said the first four months are among the busiest of the year for conventions in Atlanta. "All the major hotels downtown rely on the Congress Center as part of the package of bringing conventions to the city," Walls said.

At the hotel, a 735-foot cylinder of glass and steel that has long been an Atlanta icon and is billed as the tallest hotel in the western hemisphere, about 100 guest room windows were blown out by the storm.

Asia

Tibet protests spread to other provinces

ASIAN BRIEFS

Sri Lanka military: Fighting kills 30

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—Suspected separatist Tamil rebels killed a police officer and a soldier in separate attacks in northern Sri Lanka on Sunday, the military said, taking the death toll from two days of violence to 30. Tamil Tiger rebels ambushed a motorized rickshaw with a roadside bomb in Vavuniya district, killing one soldier and wounding four others, the military said in a statement. Also Sunday, guerrillas shot dead a police officer in northern Mannar district, the statement said. Seven other soldiers and 21 Tamil rebels have been killed in clashes across Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mannar and Welioya regions since late Friday, the military said.

Everest climbers prepare for ban

Climbers are being told by Nepalese officials that Mount Everest's summit will be put off-limits to the public from all sides during the first 10 days of May, so the Chinese can carry an Olympic torch to the summit without risking a high-altitude confrontation over Tibet's future. China hopes to put climbers on the 29,035-foot summit of Everest, the world's highest peak, by May 10 possibly using live television to broadcast it and doesn't want Tibetan activists to ruin that Olympic spectacle. It plans to use the North Col and Northeast Ridge that was first climbed in 1960—ironically by a Chinese and Tibetan team of more than 200 men and women. Everest straddles the border of Chinese-controlled Tibet and Nepal, home to many Tibetan exiles and activists. (AP)

In Laos, prized elephants are in decline

VIENTIANE, Laos (AP)—Once so famous for its herds that it was called Prathet Lane Xane, or Land of a Million Elephants, Laos is thought to have only 700 left in the wild. Elephants in Laos are better off than in most of the 12 other nations that are home to the animals. The country has extensive forest cover and a sparse population. But like elsewhere, it's a race against time. Poachers, dam builders, loggers and farmers are taking a deadly toll on the endangered species. "The situation will become very dramatic in about 10 years if nothing changes," says Sebastien Duffillot, co-founder of France-based ElefantAsia. At their current rate of decline, Laos' wild elephants could be extinct within 50 years, he warns.

TONGREN, China (AP)—Protests spread from Tibet into three neighboring provinces Sunday as Tibetans defied a Chinese government crackdown, while the Dalai Lama decried what he called the "cultural genocide" taking place in his homeland.

Demonstrations widened to Tibetan communities in Sichuan, Qinghai and Gansu provinces, forcing authorities to mobilize security forces across a broad expanse of western China.

In Tongren, riot police sent to prevent protests set off tensions when they took up positions outside a monastery. Dozens of monks, defying a directive not to gather in groups, marched

to a hill where they set off fireworks and burned incense in what one monk said was a protest, according to an Associated Press reporter at the scene.

In a sign that authorities were preparing for trouble, AP and other foreign journalists were ordered out of the Tibetan parts of Gansu and Qinghai provinces by police who told them it was for their "safety."

Meanwhile, police in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, searched buildings as a Monday deadline loomed for people who took part in a violent anti-Chinese uprising last week to surrender or face severe punishment.

Speaking from India, the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetans, called for an interna-

tional investigation into China's crackdown on demonstrators in Lhasa, which his exiled government claims left 80 people dead. China's state media has said 10 civilians were killed.

"Whether intentionally or unintentionally, some kind of cultural genocide is taking place," the Dalai Lama said, referring to an influx of Chinese migration into Tibetan areas and restrictions on Buddhist practices—policies that have generated deep resentment among Tibetans.

Tensions also boiled over outside the county seat of Aba in Sichuan province when armed police tried to stop Tibetan monks from protesting, according to a witness who refused to give his name.



In this photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency, officials of local government and institutions clear up the burnt articles on a street in Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region Sunday, March 16, 2008.

4 FBI personnel hurt in Pakistan blast

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—Pakistan's capital was on high alert Sunday and embassies reviewed security measures after a bomb struck a restaurant crowded with foreigners, killing a Turkish aid worker and wounding at least 12 others including four FBI personnel.

Saturday's attack appeared to be the first attack targeting foreigners in a recent wave of violence in Pakistan, which has been battling al-Qaida- and Taliban-linked militants.

"Four FBI personnel were slightly injured in the bombing attack in Pakistan," said Special Agent Richard Kolko, an FBI spokesman. "The FBI is provid-

ing the necessary assistance to our employees and their families."

The Saturday attack also came at a politically sensitive time—parliament is due to convene Monday, bringing to power foes of U.S.-allied President Pervez Musharraf.

A notice posted on the U.S. Embassy's Web site late Saturday urged Americans "to avoid areas where Westerners are known to congregate and to maintain a low profile," also noting that "American citizens should stay alert, be aware of their surroundings, reduce travel to a minimum, and act self-defensively at all times."

U.S. policy prohibits families

of American diplomats from accompanying them on assignment in Pakistan, but most other countries allow it. U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Kay Mayfield could not comment on whether the U.S. was taking measures such as sending home nonessential employees.

"Embassies are reviewing their security practices and the guidance they give to their employees," Mayfield said.

Concrete barriers lined the streets Sunday of the upscale neighborhood around the Luna Caprese restaurant, a popular spot for expatriates in Islamabad and one of the few that serves alcohol.

Missiles hit Pakistani tribal area

MIRAN SHAH, Pakistan (AP)—Missiles that witnesses say came from an unmanned drone flattened a suspected militant safehouse Sunday in Pakistan's tribal area along the Afghan border. State television said the strike killed about 20 people.

Witnesses said a drone dropped seven missiles on the sprawling, mud-brick compound about three miles outside Wana, the main town in South Waziristan. Only U.S.-led coalition forces in Afghanistan are known to operate unmanned drones in the region, and they have launched attacks over the Pakistani border before.

Osama bin Laden and other senior al-Qaida and Taliban leaders are believed to be hiding out somewhere in the rugged, lawless tribal regions along the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Anger over U.S. attacks on militants in the area, which often have tacit approval from President Pervez Musharraf's regime, helped carry the president's opponents to victory in parliamentary elections last month. The new parliament convenes on Monday.

Many Pakistanis believe Musharraf's friendship with the U.S. and tactics in fighting al-Qaida and Taliban militants have only fueled terrorism at home.

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World

Albanian ammo depot blast kills 9

TIRANA, Albania (AP)—Troops and police cordoned off a smoldering army depot north of the capital as crews searched Sunday for workers missing following a chain of explosions that killed at least nine people and injured hundreds.

Nine bodies have been found but 10 workers remained missing Sunday, authorities said. More than 240 people were injured, including children, officials said. More than 130 remained hospitalized.

Prime Minister Sali Berisha said the explosions in the village of Gerdec, about 6 miles north

of Tirana, were an accident: blasts triggered during work to destroy excess ammunition. The chain of explosions started Saturday and continued until early Sunday, severely hampering rescue efforts.

Footage showed a ball of fire shooting up from the site, with shrapnel and shell fragments raining down on homes and cars. The blast left a massive crater at the depot.

The first blast was heard as far away as Skopje, the Macedonian capital, some 120 miles away, and prompted a brief suspension of flights at Tirana's

nearby international airport. The explosion also damaged a major electricity transmission point, leaving the area without power.

About 80 people had been working on destroying ammunition at the time, Albin Mecaj, 22, who works at the depot, told The Associated Press. Witnesses said most were able to flee after the first blast.

Authorities evacuated 4,000 people from three villages and the surrounding area, with houses more than a mile away damaged by the blast. The blasts continued for some 14 hours, until 2 a.m.

Pope: Enough with slaughters in Iraq



Pope Benedict XVI holds the papal staff while leading a procession prior to an open-air Palm Sunday mass in St. Peter's square at the Vatican, Sunday, March 16, 2008.

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Pope Benedict XVI issued one of his strongest appeals for peace in Iraq on Sunday, days after the body of the kidnapped Chaldean Catholic archbishop was found near the northern city of Mosul.

The pope also denounced the five-year-long war, saying it had provoked the complete breakup of Iraqi civilian life.

"Enough with the slaughters. Enough with the violence. Enough with the hatred in Iraq!" Benedict said to applause at the end of his Palm Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square.

On Thursday, the body of Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho was found near Mosul. He had been abducted on Feb. 29.

Benedict has called Rahho's death an "inhuman act of violence" that offended human dignity.

On Sunday, Benedict praised Rahho for his refusal to abandon his flock despite many threats and difficulties.

Benedict said Rahho's dedication to the Catholic Church and his death compelled him to "raise a strong and sorrowful cry" to denounce the violence in Iraq spawned by the war that began five years ago this week.

Split conservatives hold Iran parliament

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared victory Sunday in Iran's parliamentary elections, saying the people had voted to reject the West after nearly complete results showed conservatives holding their majority.

But the conservatives are split. Ahmadinejad's hard-line allies won the largest share of

the votes, but a powerful bloc was formed of supporters-turned-critics of the president's fiery, confrontational manner and his handling of the ailing economy.

Reformists, who seek greater democracy in Iran and closer ties with the West, appeared likely to at least retain the small bloc they held in the outgoing

parliament.

Reform leaders called the results a success, even though their candidates could not run in at least half the races. The unelected, cleric-led Guardian Council disqualified most—including the most well-known candidates—for insufficient loyalty to Islam and Iran's 1979 revolution.

Pilot: May have shot down Saint-Exupery

PARIS (AP)—A former pilot for Nazi Germany's air force writes in a forthcoming book that he believes he shot down the author of "The Little Prince," Antoine de Saint-Exupery.

The aviation pioneer's Lockheed Lightning P-38 disappeared July 31, 1944. In the book, former Luftwaffe pilot Horst Rippert says he believes that he shot down the plane—although he is not completely sure.

Le Figaro magazine pub-

lished extracts of the book, "Saint-Exupery, the ultimate secret," over the weekend.

"I shot down Exupery," the magazine quoted Rippert as saying.

But the former Messerschmitt pilot also added: "I didn't see the pilot, and it would have been impossible for me to know that it was Exupery. I hoped, and I still hope, that it wasn't him."

Saint-Exupery was 44 when he disappeared and remains one of France's most admired

figures. He's most famous for "The Little Prince," a tender fable about a prince from an asteroid who explores the planets.

Saint-Exupery's other works, which largely deal with his aviation experiences, include "Wind, Sand and Stars" and "Flight to Arras," about a doomed reconnaissance mission.

A scuba diver has since found the wreckage of his plane off of France's Mediterranean coast between Marseille and Cassis.

Overdrive



Unnecessary oil changes are wasting money for consumers and creating millions of gallons of hazardous waste in the form of used oil.

Do you change oil too often?

By RALPH VARTABEDIAN
(C) 2008, LOS ANGELES TIMES

"Has it been 3,000 miles yet?" asks a banner hanging outside a Southern California quick oil change outlet.

The message—also conveyed on stickers placed by many quick oil change shops inside customer windshields—is to hurry back for another oil change.

But the state of California has a different message: Unnecessary oil changes are wasting money for consumers and creating millions of gallons of hazardous waste in the form of used oil.

Instead of listening to the advice of the car service industry, state officials are asking motorists to follow the recommendations of vehicle manufacturers printed in the owners manuals, which often specify oil changes at 7,000 miles or more. The officials say this would save 21.6 million gallons of oil waste a year.

Although environmental issues have played a role in consumer car-buying behavior, the concern seems to dissipate when it comes to car maintenance—despite a fairly large toxic stream that results from the operation of the vast majority of motor vehicles.

It's not that consumers are pollution happy. But they are guided by conventional wisdom, handed down from generation to generation, that frequent oil changes can vastly improve the life of their car's engine and reduce costly repairs.

I can't say there is no truth to the conventional wisdom, because certain makes and models are afflicted by oil sludge problems that are helped by frequent oil changes. But the longevity of motor oil has improved remarkably over the decades.

A key turning point came in the 1970s with the phasing out of leaded gasoline, which significantly added to the contamination of engine oil. Since then, engine technology has vastly improved to keep oil cleaner through improved tolerances and crankcase ventilation. And, most important, oil has improved with new types of additives that keep the oil working longer.

Vehicle manufacturers have recognized that their engines don't need oil changes as frequently, but the service industry and consumers have stuck with past practices.

"We are not trying to come across as experts in cars or trying to get in the way of commerce, but if you had a service, wouldn't you want customers to come back every 3,000 miles instead of every 7,500 miles," said Bert Wenzel, who helps run the program for the California Integrated Waste Management Board, a part of the state's Environmental Protection Agency.

A yearlong survey of motorists, concluded in January 2006, found that 73 percent of Califor-

nia drivers change their oil more frequently than recommended by their vehicle manufacturer. I wonder whether these folks have their teeth cleaned more frequently than recommended by their dentist.

The survey, conducted by California State University, San Marcos, found that about a quarter of drivers used the stickers on their windshield to decide when to get an oil change. Those stickers are widely used by the quick oil change industry, including Jiffy Lube.

Jiffy Lube spokeswoman Virginia Sanchez said the 3,000-mile oil change is justified when vehicles are driven under severe conditions, such as short trips, stop-and-go driving or extreme temperatures.

"A 3,000 severe-service interval holds true for the majority of the cars on the road in the U.S. today," Sanchez said.

That is, in my view, a self-serving overstatement of what severe duty means. All driving, by definition, involves stopping and going. But encountering an occasional traffic jam is different from operating a taxi in Manhattan.

Richard Sullivan also takes issue with that statement. Sullivan, a former General Motors service manager and deputy for field operations and enforcement at the California Bureau of Automotive Repair, a state agency that regulates the car service industry, said the only person who can be a fair judge of whether a vehicle is subject to severe service is an informed consumer.

As an example of severe service, he cited a vehicle used in Lake Tahoe. For an engine, it is far different to make a short trip up a steep mountain grade in freezing weather than a short trip on a flat road in 50-degree Los Angeles winter weather.

EZ Lube, another Southern California chain, uses store banners asking whether it has been 3,000 miles since your last oil change. This company paid a \$5-million settlement in December after it was charged with systematically charging Southern California customers for unnecessary repairs on their vehicles—often brought in for oil changes.

California uses about 152 million gallons of automotive lubricants—crankcase oil, gearbox oil and transmission fluid—each year.

About 50 million gallons of that oil is either burned in engines or dripped onto the highway, the board estimates. An additional 14 million gallons disappears, presumably dumped into the ground or storm drains by backyard mechanics, Wenzel said.

That leaves about 88 million of the original 152 million gallons of hazardous waste to be disposed. Every gallon of toxic waste is a big deal and fewer oil changes could help, Wenzel said.

E-mail Vartabedian at ralph.vartabedian@latimes.com.

Life & Style

Taylor tackles 'Dancing with Stars'

MIAMI (AP)—When Jason Taylor takes the stage to face network TV cameras and dance the fox trot, he figures his jitters will be Super Bowl-size.

"I'll be shaking," he says.

Still, the Miami Dolphins defensive end is glad he accepted an invitation to perform on "Dancing With the Stars." He'll be among the contestants when the show begins its sixth season Monday night.

Taylor says he's having "a blast" learning to dance, despite an arduous practice regimen that involves six hours a day in the studio, with sessions likely to become longer as the competition proceeds.

He says his feet hurt—and that's not all.

"You're using a different muscle group in dancing. It's

estly I never thought he was going to say yes."

Taylor says he has watched the show, but when approached about taking part, he first declined. His wife urged him to reconsider, and he wavered for more than two months before deciding to give it a whirl.

Why his reluctance?

"I don't dance," he says. "I don't dance at clubs. I don't dance at bar mitzvahs. I don't dance at weddings. I just don't dance."

"For whatever reason, I decided to give it a shot. I figured I'd put myself out there a little bit and stretch the limits and challenge myself to do something I wouldn't ordinarily do."

Taylor, who is on his sixth head coach with the Dolphins, is now taking instruction from his dancing partner, Edyta Sli-

play a 12th NFL season.

The Dolphins have missed the playoffs the past six years and hit bottom last season, when they went 1-15. But despite the sorry state of the franchise, Taylor says he wants to remain with Miami.

"Heck, yeah, that's where I've been for 11 years," he says. "Where else would I want to go? That's home."

But he has yet to speak with new Dolphins football czar Bill Parcells. Taylor says he doesn't know whether the new regime is unhappy he's doing a TV show in Los Angeles rather than tak-

ing part in the team's offseason training program.

"I don't really care, either, to be honest," Taylor says. "Everybody has different interests. Coach Parcells likes horses. I'm not a big horse guy. Should I gripe about him liking horses? No."

"There are a lot worse things I could be doing in the offseason than working out every day and dancing and getting in great shape. I'm not the only guy in NFL history that hasn't worked out in the offseason program every day."

Taylor's agent, Gary Wichard,

also defends the decision to take part in "Dancing With the Stars." He says Taylor has a bright future after football, with movies one possibility, and the show will raise his profile in Hollywood.

"He's not going to pass up something like this," Wichard says. "Peyton Manning and Eli Manning are probably doing 52 commercials this offseason. Bottom line, it's Jason's offseason. And when it's time to play football, nobody will be in better shape."

Taylor says dancing will help his football by improving his footwork, agility and balance.

And the athleticism that makes him one of the NFL's best pass rushers helps his dancing.

"A lot of things translate to both playing fields," he says.

He'll dance the mambo in another week, but first comes the fox trot. For his "Dancing" debut, Taylor plans to wear dark blue formal wear—"very debonaire," he says—and leave the glitz to Sliwinska.

Maybe Taylor will have a chance to give sequins and spandex a try later in the competition. Katz, for one, predicts he'll be around awhile.



AP

In this undated image released by ABC, Miami Dolphins defensive end Jason Taylor and his dance partner Edyta Sliwinska are shown.

different from football," Taylor says from Los Angeles by phone. "I'm learning there are a few joints and muscles I didn't realize God gave me."

The hit ABC show has featured former NFL players before—Emmitt Smith won his competition, and Jerry Rice was a popular contestant. Among those competing against Taylor this season will be Grand Slam tennis champion Monica Seles and Olympic skating gold medalist Kristi Yamaguchi.

But Taylor is the first active NFL player to take part.

"He's the first guy I asked who is playing right now," says Deena Katz, the show's senior talent producer. "Jason was my dream. He's one of those guys everybody knows who he is. I thought, 'I'll ask him,' but hon-

winska. At 5-foot-6 she's a foot shorter than Taylor, but he looks up to her anyway.

He's a willing student grateful to have a good teacher.

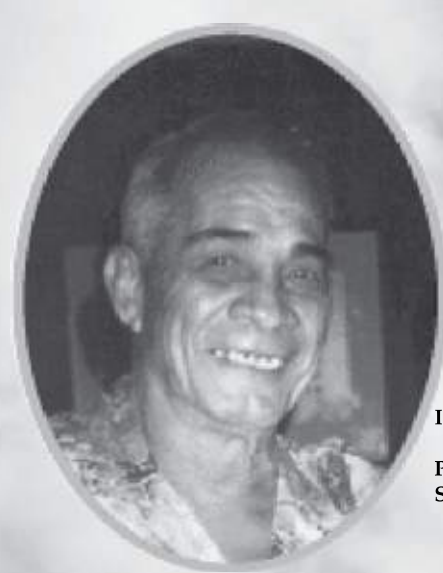
"She's the best coach I've ever had, better than all of them," he says. "She looks better, she sounds better, she's more polite and yet she gets the work done."

So is he now a good dancer?

"No," he says.

At 255 pounds, he calls himself Twinkletoes Taylor only in jest. But despite being a ballroom-dancing rookie, he says his goal is to win.

If Taylor and Sliwinska do well, the show could keep him in California until May. Then it will be back to football—at age 33, he says he has ruled out retirement and plans to



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Caregiver: Rose Catintin

He will also be missed by numerous Grand Children, Great Grand Children, nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

Daily Mass and Holy Rosary is being offered on the following:

March 17th, 18th, 19th (Mass will be at 11:45 a.m. at St. Jude Church and Rosary will be said at 7:00 p.m. at St. Jude Church)

March 20th (Mass will be at 6:00 p.m. at St. Jude Church and Rosary will be said at 8:00 p.m. at the family residence in As Lito)

March 21st (No Mass and Rosary will be said at 7:00 p.m. at the family residence in As Lito).

March 22nd (Rosary will be said at 12:00 noon at the family residence in As Lito and Mass will be at 7:00 p.m. at St. Jude Church).

March 23rd (Mass will be at 6:00 a.m. and Rosary will be said at 7:00 p.m. at St. Jude Church).

On the final day Monday March 24th 2008, His remains will be escorted from Borja Funeral Home in San Jose to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral at 7:00 a.m. followed by responso & Holy Rosary. Viewing will be from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Mass of the Christian Burial will be offered at 11:00 a.m., followed by burial at Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

*Your Thoughts & Prayers will be greatly appreciated
From the Family*



Crowds hear 'Horton' hauling in \$45M

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Horton hears a hit. Family audiences boosted 20th Century Fox's ani-

mated tale "Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who!" to a \$45.1 million debut, the best opening so

far this year, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Featuring the voices of Jim

Carrey and Steve Carell in an adaptation of the beloved story-book about an elephant defending a microscopic community from destruction, "Horton Hears a Who" is the latest computer-animated film from Blue Sky Studios, the outfit behind the "Ice Age" flicks.

The previous weekend's No. 1 movie, the Warner Bros. action yarn "10,000 B.C.," slipped to second place with \$16.4 million, raising its 10-day total to \$61.2 million.

Summit Entertainment's "Never Back Down," about a troubled youth who finds purpose in the sport of mixed martial arts fighting, opened in third place with \$8.6 million.

The weekend's other new wide release, Rogue Pictures' horror thriller "Doomsday," premiered at No. 7 with \$4.7 million. The movie follows a team of specialists trying to find a cure for a ravaging epidemic that has forced the quarantine of Scotland.

"Horton Hears a Who" topped the \$40.1 million opening in January for "Clover-

field," which previously was the year's No. 1 debut.

"It's a 'who-mongous' opening, and it's playing to all Whos two to 92," said 20th Century Fox distribution executive Chris Aronson. "If you can't do an

has four of the top six March debuts of all time.

"They should rename March 'Blue Sky month,'" said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Media By Numbers.

"Horton" landed in between the debut weekends of two other big-screen Seuss adaptations, 2000's "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" with \$55.1 million and 2003's "The Cat in the Hat" with \$38.3 million.

With solid reviews for "Horton," Fox is counting on strong business through Easter next Sunday and beyond, as many students are out of school, Aronson said.

Hollywood's revenues rose for the first time after four straight weekends of declining business. Overall receipts came in at \$127 million, up 8.5 percent from the same weekend last year, according to Media By Numbers.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Media By Numbers LLC. Final figures will be released Monday.

1. "Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who!," \$45.1 million.
2. "10,000 B.C.," \$16.4 million.
3. "Never Back Down," \$8.6 million.
4. "College Road Trip," \$7.9 million.
5. "Vantage Point," \$5.4 million.
6. "The Bank Job," \$4.9 million.
7. "Doomsday," \$4.7 million.
8. "Semi-Pro," \$3 million.
9. "The Other Boleyn Girl," \$2.9 million.
10. "The Spiderwick Chronicles," \$2.4 million.

ode to Dr. Seuss with an opening like this, come on."

The new movie was the fourth-best opening ever in March. With the two "Ice Age" movies, "Horton" and "Robots," Blue Sky Studios now

Gossip blogger shows music power at SXSW

AUSTIN, Texas (AP)—Last year, when gossip blogger Perez Hilton came to South by Southwest, he was just a spectator.

This year, he arrived as one of the music industry's key playmakers—and his newfound power was on full display as he played host to one of the festival's more coveted parties.

"Thank you Perez!" Robyn, the Swedish-born pop star who is releasing an album in the United States this summer, gushed on stage Saturday night as she performed in front of a packed crowd filled with industry insiders, artists, and the typical hangers-on. Even more people lined the block around the venue in downtown Austin, hoping for a chance to see acts ranging from Internet darling Katy Perry to established artists such as Robyn and N.E.R.D.

"There's a lot of great acts performing these past couple of days, but not all on the same stage on the same night," boasted Hilton, sporting bleached blond hair with streaks of pink, in an interview with The Associated Press on Friday. "The musicians performing speak for the evening."

They also speak to Hilton's ever-increasing clout within the music industry. While his site routinely posts salacious details about perennial gossip targets like Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan and the crew from "The Hills," he also regularly gushes about his favorite artists and songs—like Robyn.

Numerous articles have been written crediting Hilton (real name Mario Lavandeira) for helping to boost an artist's sales and profile from his postings:



Gossip columnist Perez Hilton poses at the Entertainment Weekly Island Def Jam Grammy party in Los Angeles in this Feb. 10, 2008 file photo.

The *New York Times* reported last month that Warner Bros. Records was in negotiations to give Hilton a development deal that would make him an executive on the label.

"It's very flattering," Hilton said with a smile about all the attention.

So, not surprisingly, Hilton lined up a few key artists to perform at his party. The biggest act was undoubtedly N.E.R.D., the trio led by superproducer Pharrell Williams, who said Hilton's site is a key outlet for groups such as his.

"He's connected to the kids, he's connected to our demographic—people who want to be in the know, and he's opinionated and that's what makes it work," Williams said after spending a few minutes chatting with Hilton at the celebrity lounge Friday.

Hilton's ability to create buzz for an artist is hard to duplicate, Perry said.

"Managers in the industry

want their acts to be featured on his blog because it does give a lot of press, and hopefully good press sometimes," she said with a laugh. "He's got some pretty good ears. He's featured myself and some friends of mine so we're grateful."

Not everyone is happy about Hilton's success. As popular as his showcase may have been, there were some at SXSW who grumbled about the fact that a gossip maven has decision-making power in the industry.

But Hilton insists he and his site have musical integrity.

"I only post things on there that I really enjoy and love and support—there's no payola Perez," Hilton said. "So I think readers who read my site know there's an authenticity there and they really respond to that."

Hilton said even though he gets managers and record label executives begging him to promote their artists, he gets most of his tips from fans who send him music links online, and he insisted he isn't swayed by pushes by industry insiders.

Hilton may be giving his own advice to artists soon, if the Warner Bros. deal works out. And while he's known for his scoops, he's still peeved at the *Times* for revealing the tidbit.

"I'm such a fatalist I don't like making announcements like that unless it's done. Hopefully it's going to happen—we've been talking for a while now," he said.

Not that Hilton's depending on that label or any other to secure his place in the music industry.

"If it doesn't happen, I'll just do it on my own," he said, ever the entrepreneur.



In this image released by 20th Century Fox, a still from the film "Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who" is shown.

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Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears A Who

Friday 4:20 7:05 9:35
 Sat & Sun 1:15 4:20 7:05 9:35
 Mon thru Thurs 4:20 7:05 9:35

Jim Carrey (v), Steve Carell (v)
 Family, Animated • Rated PG

Synopsis

An imaginative elephant named Horton hears a faint cry for help coming from a tiny speck of dust floating through the air. Although Horton doesn't know it yet, that speck houses an entire city named Who-ville, inhabited by the microscopic Whos, led by the Mayor. Despite being ridiculed and threatened by his neighbors, who think he has lost his mind, Horton is determined to save the particle—because "a person's a person, no matter how small."



Never Back Down

Friday 4:25 7:05 9:35
 Sat & Sun 1:25 4:25 7:30 9:55
 Mon thru Thurs 4:25 7:30 9:55

Sean Faris, Djimon Hounsou
 Action, Drama • Rated PG13

Synopsis

Jake Tyler has recently moved to Orlando, Florida with his family to support his younger brother's shot at a professional tennis career. Jake was a star athlete on the football team at home, but in this new city he is an outsider with a reputation for being a quick tempered brawler. Making an attempt to fit in, at the invitation of a flirtatious classmate, Baja, Jake goes to a party where he is unwittingly pulled into a fight with a bully named Ryan McDonald.



10,000 BC

Friday 4:30 7:10 9:50
 Sat & Sun 1:30 4:30 7:10 9:50
 Mon thru Thurs 4:30 7:10 9:50

Omar Sharif, Steven Strait
 Drama, Adventure • Rated PG13

Synopsis

In a remote mountain tribe, the young hunter D'Leh has found his heart's passion—the beautiful Evolet. But when a band of mysterious warlords raid his village and kidnap Evolet, D'Leh leads a small group of hunters to pursue the warlords to the end of the world to save her. As they venture into unknown lands for the first time, the group discovers there are civilizations beyond their own and that mankind's reach is far greater than they ever knew.



Rambo

Friday 4:10 7:15 10:00
 Sat & Sun 1:20 4:10 7:15 10:00
 Mon thru Thurs 4:10 7:15 10:00

Sylvester Stallone, Julie Benz
 Action, Adventure • Rated R



Vantage Point

Friday 4:15 7:00 9:45
 Sat & Sun 1:10 4:15 7:00 9:45
 Mon thru Thurs 4:15 7:00 9:45

Dennis Quaid, Forest Whitaker
 Drama, Thriller • Rated PG13



The Spiderwick Chronicles

Friday 4:00 7:20 9:30
 Sat & Sun 1:00 4:00 7:20 9:30
 Mon thru Thurs 4:00 7:20 9:30

Seth Rogen, Mary-Louise Parker
 Fantasy, Children • Rated PG13



Jumper

Friday 4:05 7:25 9:40
 Sat & Sun 1:05 4:05 7:25 9:40
 Mon thru Thurs 4:05 7:25 9:40

Hayden Christensen, Samuel L. Jackson
 Adventure, Sci-Fi • Rated PG13

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Spears pal to stay away 30 more days

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Britney Spears' friend Sam Lutfi has agreed to stay away from her for at least another month, delaying a hearing that could have made a restraining order against him permanent, The Associated Press learned Sunday.

Lutfi and conservators for Spears' estate agreed to have the restraining order extended for 30 days, said a person close to the pop star who spoke on condition of anonymity because the extension had not yet been for-

mally approved.

A judge was expected to approve it Monday.

Lutfi did not immediately return a phone message Sunday seeking comment. Phone messages and e-mails to lawyers for Spears and her estate co-conservators, which include her father, also were not immediately returned.

A Superior Court commissioner last month ordered Lutfi to stay 250 yards from Spears and her home.

Spears' mother, Lynne, requested the order based on allegations that Lutfi—Spears' frequent companion and sometime manager—had held the singer hostage in her own home, drugged her and taken over her finances.

Spears' father, James, was named one of two co-conservators of her estate after the singer was hospitalized twice in January. The conservatorship has been extended until July 31.

Conservatorships are granted for people deemed unable

to take care of themselves or their affairs.

Before her hospitalization, Spears had shown increasingly erratic behavior. She shaved her head, was seen in public without underwear, ran over a celebrity photographer's foot and attacked a vehicle with an umbrella.

Spears has since had very limited contact with her toddler sons who are under the sole physical and legal custody of her ex-husband, Kevin Federline.

N.E.R.D debut new music in Austin, Texas

AUSTIN, Texas (AP)—N.E.R.D.'s new single "Everybody Nose," which depicts a club-hopper's drug use, could be the theme song for out-of-control party girls on the celebrity circuit. But frontman Pharrell Williams says the song is not chastising people for their questionable habits.

"The message is just making an observation. It's not us condoning or glorifying it or talking about people who do it," the su-

perproducer told The Associated Press on Friday. "We're just saying America, look at what's going on ... this is what it's like this is what this girl does."

"Everybody Nose" is the first new music from the eclectic trio in years. The group—which includes Williams' Neptunes production partner Chad Hugo and friend Shay Hayley—haven't released an album since 2004, and were debuting some of their

new music at performances at the South by Southwest music festival. Williams said the group took so long because they were "waiting for the right moment."

"There's a lack thereof of energy, so we just wanted to be one of the bands that would re-install that energetic feeling," said Williams, who along with Hugo has produced for acts ranging from Beyonce to Jay-Z to Justin Timberlake.

"I think it sounds more aggressive, more focused on emotional buildup and just way hotter, it's way better—its louder, and it's more texturized," said Hugo of their sound, which ranges from hip-hop to punk sounds.

N.E.R.D.—which stands for "No One Ever Really Dies" is due to go out on the road with Kanye West, Rihanna and Lupe Fiasco in April. The group's album is due in June.

Paris roots for sis at L.A. Fashion Week

CULVER CITY, Calif. (AP)—It was a Hilton family affair. Kathy, Rick and Paris Hilton—along with Paris' current squeeze Benji Madden—were front and center Tuesday at the Mercedes-Benz L.A. Fashion Week show for Nicky Hilton's high-end Nicholai line.

Before the models took the runway, mom Kathy mingled with



Designer Nicky Hilton, right, and her sister, Paris Hilton pose backstage before the Nicholai Fall 2008 fashion show during Mercedes Benz fashion week in Culver City, Calif. on Tuesday, March 11, 2008.

the crowd, dad Rick snapped iPhone photos and big sis Paris exchanged whispers with Madden, the Good Charlotte guitarist.

The latest designs from the younger Hilton sister included trench coats, knit tops, houndstooth accents and lots of leather trim. Nicky debuted the more-expensive Nicholai line at New York Fashion Week last year. She launched her first clothing line—the casual Chick by Nicky Hilton—in 2004.

At the end of the Nicholai show, Nicky's boyfriend David Katzenberg presented her with a bouquet of white roses.

Star cooks up more than food at SXSW

AUSTIN, Texas (AP)—Of all the sponsored events at the South by Southwest music festival, Rachael Ray's artist showcase may have been the most puzzling.

After all, Ray is the cherub-faced, perky cook and host of her own daytime TV show—and there she was at SXSW playing host to edgy acts like The Raveonettes.

Ray brushed aside the idea that her presence at SXSW, which ended Sunday, was out of place.

"I guess people think that I just live in a kitchen but I love music, every type of music," she told The Associated Press as she cooled off from the Texas heat in an air-conditioned bus.

"I listen to jazz, my husband and I go to the opera a few times a year, we both love indie rock, go to a lot of indie rock shows. It's not surprising to me," she continued. "I know that I'm more than just a cook. I think that's why people probably thought it was so weird but I married a man who has an indie-rock band, so how is it that weird when you really think about it?"

That band, The Cringe (led by her hubby John Cusimano),



Rachael Ray hosts a SXSW Music Festival day party in Austin, Texas on Saturday, March 15, 2008.

were among the performers at Ray's showcase, which had people lined outside the door waiting to get in. But music wasn't the only draw: after all, Ray's claim to fame is her cooking.

So, she made up three recipes for the event, including a seven-layer slider and a vegetarian macaroni and cheese, which were among the dishes served up to the packed crowd.

Though this was Ray's first time at SXSW, she's a regular to the city of Austin. "I think of every excuse in the world to come back."

Help for hoarder is available from many different sources

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



DEAR ABBY: Your reply to the letter from "Troubled in Colorado" (Jan. 10), regarding "Meg," a compulsive hoarder, missed one important point. Hoarding is treatable. I am a code compliance officer and encounter these situations frequently.

Hoarding is known by several other names -- Pack Rat Syndrome, collecting, etc. -- but it is considered to be a form of OCD, which is highly treatable once you convince the person to get treatment. Sufferers are usually aware they have a problem, but ashamed to let anyone know.

This problem crosses all social and economic boundaries. People with it are often highly intelligent, otherwise normal people. They just need help, and it is available. Many areas have support groups to help.

JUDY JONES, MURIETTA, CALIF.

DEAR JUDY: Thank you for writing. Yes, as with many other problems, help is available -- if those who need it will only reach out. People with OCD can be helped through therapy, drugs, experts and organizations.

One such organization is the Obsessive Compulsive Foundation. It is best accessed through its Web site, www.ocfoundation.org. Its phone number is (617) 973-5801. It offers referrals to local groups across the United States. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: "Troubled in Colorado" should call her county social services office. Most states have a senior adult services office that could help the woman in that letter take care of her needs. Hoarding is often a sign of self-neglect, and that's something these officers often deal with. They can refer her to providers who can help her clean her place.

If she has a mental health issue, the senior services worker would also help her find counseling or a doctor to deal with her challenge in discarding things.

C.R. MAHONEY, AGENCY ON AGING, CLEVELAND

DEAR READERS: FYI, your local Area Agency on Aging can be reached at (800) 677-1116 or at www.eldercare.gov, and has expertise in handling such matters.

DEAR ABBY: I'm responding to "Troubled in Colorado," who was trying to decide what to do about the poor living conditions she found in her sick co-worker's house. I work in a hospital, and what I have seen under similar circumstances is that EMS will report living conditions like the one she described to the receiving ER, which will likely get a case manager involved, along with treating the patient's medical problems. The woman sounds like she has significant OCD that needs to be addressed.

R.G. IN CRANSTON, R.I.

DEAR ABBY: As a professional organizer for more than 10 years, I have seen it all. "Meg," the woman in that letter, is a hoarder, which can be caused by depression. Any professional organizer should be able to help her get organized. But she also needs professional help to get to the bottom of her depression. The condition of her house is a symptom of her problem, and any professional organizer who deals with hoarders can help her.

LESLIE J., NEW BRITAIN, CONN.

DEAR ABBY: My sisters found me in similar circumstances. The dirty living quarters, not reaching out for help -- these are all too common among people with major depressive disorder. The past year has been difficult, but with the help of my family, my therapist and the right medication, I'm doing well. You were right, Abby, when you said "Troubled" needs to let the hospital know, so "Meg" can get the help she needs.

DOING BETTER IN MILWAUKEE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." To order, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby - Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Lehman earns 2nd chance as Met's Tristan

NEW YORK (AP)—Tenor Gary Lehman earned a second chance to sing in "Tristan und Isolde" at the Metropolitan Opera.

Two days after Lehman made his Met debut as Tristan in place of ailing Ben Heppner, the Met said Sunday that Lehman also will sing in Tuesday night's performance.

The tenor for next Saturday's matinee, which will be transmitted in high-definition to theaters around the world, remains TBA.

Soprano Deborah Voigt is scheduled to return Tuesday after leaving Friday night's performance in the middle of the second act due to a stomach ailment. She was replaced by her cover singer, Janice Baird,

who made her Met debut.

Heppner, sidelined by a virus, hopes to return for the final two performances of the revival, on March 25 and 28. Because Heppner and Voigt were to have been singing "Tristan" together for the first time, the six-performance run was close to sold out.



In this photo released by The Metropolitan Opera, Gary Lehman and Janice Baird appear in their title roles during a performance of Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde," at the Metropolitan Opera, Friday, March 14, 2008.

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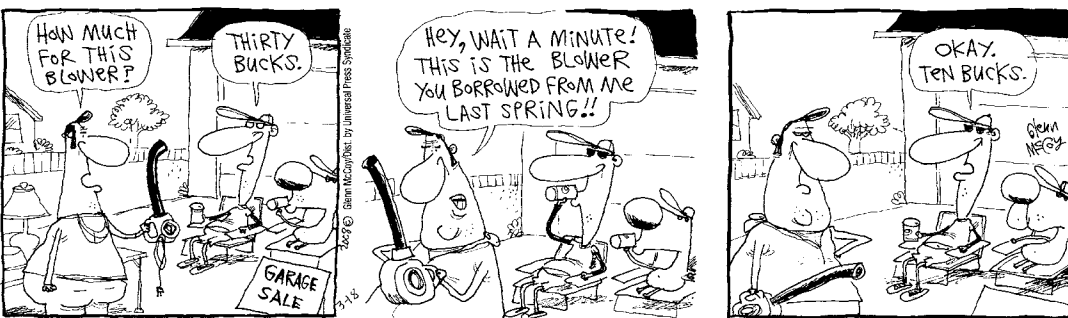
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ACROSS 1 "Two Years Before the Mast" author 5 Boutique 9 Crib 12 Squared away 13 Ottumwa's state 14 Pitching stat 15 Samantha's sitcom 17 Triangular sail 18 Slender shark 19 Attire 21 Opening night 24 Ball of yarn 25 Galena and cinnabar 26 Brit's radio 30 Lubricant 31 Picture puzzle 32 Tell tales

DOWN 31 Archie's nickname for his son-in-law 35 Existed 36 Tome 37 Burdened 38 Horse-farm employee 40 Coral structure 42 Neither mate 43 Made very, very happy 48 Mimic 49 Arm bone 50 Stead 51 Marry 52 Aspen gear 53 Ireland

23 Harped on 24 Gunk 26 Fortnight half 27 Legend-ary basketball 28 Paddock coach Hank 29 Wit-nessed 31 Squash-ed square 34 Also 35 Food made with an iron 37 Main-lander's memento 38 Rodents do it 39 Lasso 40 Hindu royal 41 Greek vowels 44 Wapiti 45 Midafter-noon, on a sundial 46 Auction ending 47 Payable

Solution time: 21 mins.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER 3-18

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CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Dane Cook, 36; Queen Latifah, 38; Vanessa Williams, 45; Brad Dourif, 58

Happy Birthday: The more secretive you are this year, the better your influence when you disclose your plans or present what you've been working on. Pay attention to detail. Make alterations in your personal life and to your home. It's a year of control for you, so don't be afraid to take it. Your numbers are 6, 11, 24, 32, 41, 48

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Talk to loved ones—don't yell or lose patience and you will understand their emotional needs and the situation. Take time out for yourself late in the day. ★★★★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): This is the perfect day to do a little research. Investigate opportunities and take part in a program that will enable you to make a transition you want to make. It's time to take action. ★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Fix up your place and you will add value as well as comfort. Someone you are attracted to or would like to work closely with may not be all that he or she has led you to believe. ★★★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Don't play emotional games and you will get much further ahead in your professional and personal dealings. A past partner, friend or lover will be interested in connecting with you again. If you feel the same way, put in a call. ★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Don't mislead anyone regarding your current or past situation. You may

want to talk to someone about your financial outlook and how you can improve it in the future, but don't let anyone take control of your investments. ★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): There is plenty going on that you can benefit from. A change in a relationship will be to your advantage. Don't be fooled by what someone eludes to. Find out the facts and go from there. ★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): A serious prospect or partnership is in the stars if you participate in a fundraising event or other humanitarian cause. Networking will help you spark enthusiasm regarding your goals. An emotional issue can be resolved with a little ingenuity. ★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Follow your heart. Someone may try to fool you by playing an emotional game but, as long as you stand up for yourself, you will come out on top. Plans to take a business trip should be in the works. ★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You'll be undecided about what you should do and what you want to do. You may convince yourself to favor your own needs but, in doing so, you may upset someone who counts on you. Taking a short trip will lead to delays and expenses. ★★★★★

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You may want to impress the people around you but you are better off playing it safe. If someone wants you to invest in something you

EUGENIA LAST THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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know little about, do your own research or you may suffer loss. ★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You may have trouble pinning someone down with regard to how he or she feels. Don't tolerate emotional games. For now, just listen and observe. ★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Do what's on your list and avoid a discussion with someone who wants to confuse you or point you in the wrong direction. You are clever and creative enough to go it alone. You've got everything to gain by pressing ahead. ★★

Birthday Baby: You are charming and someone who goes the distance to help others. You stand by your convictions and are serious about life. You are imaginative, emotional and quick to find solutions.

Eugenia's Web sites: astroadvice.com for fun, eugenialast.com for confidential consultations

SUDOKU Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

Difficulty Level ★★ 3/18

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WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

DRESS-DOWN FRIDAYS Solution: 8 letters

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R O I A I A O J S S E R D E Y
O O E L E T Y O E L T O I T L
N S L K S S T T B N W R U T E
M E T U S O A A E N I A G E O
E T C U L T M S E S E L U R
N A B T U R E E P T U W T Q G
T V F M O G K R O R E L N I A
A I I F A E C I F F O F B T N
T T M N F F A T S F O L P U E I
S O A S B O J T K R E P E L Z
C M O R A L E A I N S P I R E

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Yesterday's Answer: Exhibits

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WHATZIT Solution:Big show off

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Rockets extend streak to 22, beat Lakers



HOUSTON (AP)—Rafer Alston scored 31 points and hit eight 3-pointers, both career highs, and the Houston Rockets beat the Los Angeles Lakers 104-92 to extend their winning streak to 22 and claim sole possession of first place in the National Basketball Association's Western Conference.

Kobe Bryant scored 24 points for the Lakers and smothered Tracy McGrady on defense, helping hold him to 11 points on 4-for-16 shooting.

The rest of the Rockets made up for it. Shane Battier scored 14 points and shadowed Bryant most of the game. Backup point guard Bobby Jackson added 19 points and Luis Scola had 13 points and 11 rebounds.

Nuggets 168, SuperSonics 116

At Denver, Carmelo Anthony scored 26 points, Allen Iverson finished with 24 and Marcus Camby had a triple-double to help Denver set an NBA season high for points in a half and a game.

The 168 points are the most Denver has scored in a game since Jan. 11, 1984, against San Antonio. It is also the most the Nuggets have scored in regulation.

The Nuggets fell 16 points shy of the franchise record, set in a 186-184 triple-overtime loss to Detroit on Dec. 13, 1983.

The Nuggets' 168 points top the 138 they scored against Seattle in a 32-point win on Feb. 27, which was also the league high for the season. Denver scored 84 points in both halves, sur-



Houston Rockets' Rafer Alston (12) loses the ball as Los Angeles Lakers' Ronny Turiaf, left, defends during the fourth quarter of a basketball game Sunday, March 16, 2008, in Houston.

passing the previous high of 80 set by Phoenix on Nov. 21.

Camby had 13 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists.

Kings 106, Raptors 100

At Sacramento, California, Kevin Martin had 32 points and eight rebounds as Sacramento downed Toronto.

Ron Artest added 19 points and 10 rebounds, and Mikki Moore scored 17 for the Kings, who have won three of four games.

Jason Kapono scored 26 points for the Raptors, who have lost four straight and five of six. Rasho Nestorovic added 20 points and eight rebounds for Toronto.

The Raptors played their ninth straight game without All-Star forward Chris Bosh, the team's leading scorer and rebounder, who's out with a sore right knee. Toronto is 2-7 during the stretch without Bosh and 4-10 overall this season without him.

Pistons 105, Hornets 84

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Jarvis Hayes scored 29 points, including a career-high seven 3-pointers, to lead Detroit to the win.

Chauncey Billups finished with 17 points and Tayshaun Prince scored 13 for the Pistons, who have won four of five.

The Hornets lost for just the second time in seven games. New Orleans was missing David West, who sprained his right ankle Friday against the Los Angeles Lakers.

New Orleans got 21 points from Peja Stojakovic and Chris Paul added 14 points and 14 assists.

Cavaliers 98, Bobcats 91

In Cleveland, LeBron James scored 33 points and Zydrunas Ilgauskas had 16 points and nine rebounds for Cleveland.

Ben Wallace scored his only two baskets of the game, Delonte West

added a jumper and James hit a bank shot in the lane in the final 2 minutes as the Cavaliers held on after nearly squandering an 11-point lead early in the fourth quarter.

Jason Richardson scored nine straight points, including two 3-pointers and a three-point play to spark Charlotte's comeback. He finished with 33 points.

Ilgauskas returned to the starting lineup after missing seven games with an inflamed disk in his lower back.

Mavericks 98, Heat 73

In Miami, Dirk Nowitzki scored 21 points before sitting out most of the second half, and Dallas stormed out to a huge early lead on the way to the win.

Josh Howard added 15 for the Mavericks, who led by 20 points midway through the opening quarter and have beaten the Heat in each of the teams' past eight regular-season meetings. Brandon Bass and Jason Terry each scored 14 and Jerry Stackhouse had 12 for Dallas, which snapped a three-game road losing skid and won their fifth straight overall.

Hawks 109, Knicks 98

In New York, Joe Johnson had 28 points and 11 assists, and Atlanta moved into a tie for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Marvin Williams added 25 points for the Hawks, who used their athleticism to break open what was only a five-point game early in the final quarter. Reserve Josh Childress had 14 of his 22 points in the second half and added nine rebounds.

UNC, Memphis, Kansas, UCLA get top seeds



The inexact science of putting together the NCAA tournament bracket turned out to be pretty exact this time around. No big beefs with the top seeds—North Carolina, Memphis, Kansas and UCLA.

No snubbed bubble teams with shout-it-to-the-mountaintop complaints—even if Arizona State and Virginia Tech do have somewhat compelling arguments.

And no defending champion, either. But not even that was a surprise.

Florida, completely rebuilt after winning two titles in a row, was written off well before Selection Sunday after losing its last four games, including the first round of the Southeastern Conference tournament.

So, let March Madness begin, and call the Tar Heels (32-2) favorites if you must. Led by Tyler Hansbrough, North Carolina earned the overall top seed in the tournament and won't have to leave its home state on the road to the Final Four in San Antonio. Carolina's first two games are scheduled for Raleigh, its next two would be in Charlotte.

"It's an advantage if you play well," said Carolina coach Roy Williams, trying to lead the Tar Heels to their second title in four years. "Just because the crowd's cheering for you, I've never had a crowd win a game. I know it sounds wacko."

Only four teams from the Atlantic Coast Conference made it, some-

thing of a surprise considering it was the top-ranked conference in the all-important RPI.

But what does the RPI really mean these days?

Virginia Tech coach Seth Greenberg is certainly no fan. His ACC team got snubbed despite being ranked No. 53 on the list.

"We need to get rid of the RPI totally from people's train of thought," he said. "Because one second, the head of the committee says the RPI is inconsequential, and the next second, he says they can use the RPI to eliminate a team."

That might have been the case with Arizona State, which was 83 on that list despite quality victories over third-seeded Stanford and Xavier and two over rival Arizona, which made it off the bubble for its 24th straight NCAA appearance.

But Sun Devils coach Herb Sendek refused to let the snub get the best of him.

"By playing the role of the victim, you let a great opportunity slide by to learn from the experience," Sendek said.

Arizona State's spot might have been taken by Georgia, which won four games at the SEC tournament—including two in one day after a tornado ripped past the Georgia Dome—to complete an inspiring run into the tournament with a 17-16 record.

"We found out we had more than we thought we did," said coach Dennis Felton, who likely saved his job with this remarkable string. "We kind

of persevered."

Georgia, a 14th seed, opens against third-seeded Xavier in the West region.

The final bubble spots went to Villanova, a 12th seed in the Midwest, and St. Joseph's, an 11th seed in the East that beat Xavier twice.

Baylor got in as an 11th seed in the West, an impressive rebound for a program that nearly disintegrated after the murder of Patrick Dennehy by a teammate in 2003.

Kentucky made it as a No. 11 seed in the South despite growing pains under Billy Gillespie, who's in his first year at the school.

Kansas State was an 11th-seeded bubble team, and how could the committee resist bringing freshman-of-the-year candidate Michael Beasley into the tournament—then pairing him against another sensational freshman, O.J. Mayo of Southern California? They'll play Thursday in a first-round Midwest region game.

The top-seeded teams offered no surprises or outrage, the way, say, Washington did three years ago when the Huskies were No. 1 in the West.

UCLA has been a top team all season and won the Pac-10 tournament to get the nod in the West. Kansas beat Texas in the Big 12 final Sunday, in a game almost everyone agreed would be for top seeding in the Midwest. Memphis is from the less-prestigious Conference USA and lost to Tennessee in the regular season, but the Tigers (33-1) won their conference and the

of the best 34 at-large teams in the country," O'Connor said. "Also, they were 2-4 against the top teams in their conference."

For the second straight year, only six of those 34 at-large bids went to teams from smaller conferences. That included St. Joe's, which earned one of the final spots in the bracket, but didn't include Illinois State. But how to argue against snubbing a team that lost by 30 points its last time out, in the finals of the Missouri Valley Conference against Drake?

Meanwhile, mid-major George Mason, the team that showed what March Madness is really all about with its incredible run to the Final Four two years ago, is back as a 12th seed after winning the Colonial Athletic Association crown.

Last year's national runner-up, Ohio State, was also left on the bubble, meaning both of the previous season's finalists will miss the tournament for the first time since the bracket was expanded in 1985.

O'Connor said the selection committee had eight contingency plans based on the possibilities from Sunday's five conference title games, but the committee had done lots of advance work to make the last-second decisions less difficult.

"We said from the beginning, when you look at what happens in the NCAA tournament, all the publicity, all the hype, the economics ... the real thing is playing the games with the kids on the court," he said.

No argument there. And not much with the bracket his committee produced, either.

Tiger remains perfect with dramatic putt

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Tiger Woods studied his 25-foot birdie putt from every angle, convincing himself he could make it to win the Arnold Palmer Invitational because he had a similar putt in the same situation seven years ago at Bay Hill. He wasn't alone in his thinking.

Palmer stood behind the 18th green in his pink shirt and blue blazer, waiting to hand him the trophy. The King was joined by an army of fans who squinted into the late afternoon sun, all expecting Woods to continue a winning streak that began in September.

And then there was Bart Bryant, who challenged Woods over the final two hours, but now sat in the scoring trailer and listened.

"I heard a big cheer, and I got up and left," Bryant said. "That's why he's Tiger Woods."

This one was special.

Tied for the lead on one of the most intimidating closing holes in golf, Woods delivered his best swing of the week with a 5-iron from 164 yards into a stiff breeze, then a 25-foot birdie putt that tumbled into the cup to stretch his PGA Tour winning streak to five.

It was his 64th victory, tying Ben Hogan at No. 3 on the tour's career list.

And it produced a celebration like none of the others. Woods backpedaled as the ball crept closer to the hole, turned and slammed his cap to the ground as he let out a roar. Woods looked perplexed when caddie Steve Williams handed him his hat.

"I was like, 'How in the hell did he get my hat?'" Woods said. "Evidently, it came off. I need to see the highlights. I was so into the moment of the putt going in and winning the golf tournament."

Woods closed with a 4-under 66 to keep intact the ridiculous notion of a perfect season.

Or is it?

"What he's doing right now, you can't even fathom," Bryant said after closing with a 67. He was the only player to break par all four rounds at Bay Hill, and all it got him was second place.



Tiger Woods, left, shares a laugh with Arnold Palmer during the trophy presentation after Woods won the Arnold Palmer Invitational golf tournament at the Bay Hill Club in Orlando, Fla., Sunday, March 16, 2008. AP

There have been five winning streaks of at least five tournaments in PGA Tour history. Woods owns three of them, with the others belonging to Hogan (6) and Byron Nelson, whose 11 in a row is considered among the most untouchable records in all of sports.

Woods won Bay Hill for the fifth time, becoming the first player in PGA Tour history to win at least five times in four different tournaments. The others are the Buick Invitational, Bridgestone Invitational and the CA Championship, where he plays next week at Doral as the three-time defending champion.

No wonder some are starting to question whether he will lose again.

Not since Bay Hill in 2001 against Phil Mickelson has Woods won a PGA

Tour event with a birdie on the 72nd hole to win by a shot.

"I kept telling myself, 'I've done this before. I did it against Phil, and this time it's a little bit deeper into the green and the putt has a little bit more break and it has a little more grain. I've done it before, and I can do it again,'" Woods said.

And he did.

Palmer grinned and nodded, as if to tell those around him, "I told you so."

"He just said, 'It doesn't surprise me you made the putt,'" Woods said, who passed Palmer on the career victory list a month ago in Arizona. "Somehow you just get a good feeling. And he being a player knows better than anybody."

Hogan won 64 times over 21 years, the last victory coming at the 1959

Colonial National Invitational. The next target for Woods is Jack Nicklaus at 73, with Sam Snead's record of 82 victories looking closer each time Woods plays.

"It's pretty amazing to be in that kind of company," Woods said. "I've had an amazing run in my career, and hopefully, it continues."

No one can say these guys are laying down for Woods. He had to fight to the finish under a sweltering sun, and Bryant was visibly disappointed when he heard the roar and saw the putt. A victory would have sent him to the World Golf Championship next week, and earned him a spot in the Masters.

"I was pretty hopeless sitting there in the trailer, but I did what I thought

I was supposed to do, which was put the pressure back on Tiger to make the play," Bryant said. "And he has a habit of making it when he needs to."

Woods has won six straight times worldwide, which includes a thrilling rally in Dubai last month. The winning streak does not include his seven-shot victory at the Target World Challenge in December, an unofficial event with 16 players.

His average score during the PGA Tour streak is 66.13, and his dominance is such that he has more career victories than Mickelson and Vijay Singh combined.

Woods finished at 10-under 270 and earned \$1,044,000, putting him on the cusp of going over \$80 million for his career.

Sean O'Hair, playing in the final group with Woods, overcame a sluggish start with three birdies on the back nine to keep alive slim hopes, but he could only manage a 69 to tie for third with Singh (69) and Cliff Kresge (67).

It was the biggest buzz in the final round this year, and fans who stood four-deep around Woods expected an early knockout. He delivered early with a 15-foot birdie putt on the second hole to break out of a five-way tie for the lead, and he didn't trail again the rest of the day.

But in the stifling heat, it was never easy.

The greatest challenge came from Bryant, who played bogey-free for the first 10 holes to stay one shot behind Woods, and then both players squandered great chances to set the stage for a gritty back nine.

Woods hit yet another flawless approach to 6 feet left of the flag on No. 10 and was on the verge of going two shots ahead. But he gunned it 30 inches by the hole, quickly settled over the par putt and missed it for his first three-putt bogey of the week. That dropped him into a tie with Bryant, who had a 25-foot birdie on the 11th for the outright lead. He also three-putted for bogey, missing a 2 1/2-foot putt to again fall one shot behind.

Woods didn't make another birdie until the final hole.

Red Sox ace Beckett won't go to Japan



FORT MYERS, Fla. (AP)—Josh Beckett will stay behind when the

Red Sox fly 7,500 miles to Tokyo on Wednesday, even though he threw a ball 75 feet without back pain on Sunday.

Boston manager Terry Francona made official what had been obvious for several days: his ace right-hander won't travel to Japan, where he probably would have started the Red Sox regular season opener against the Oakland Athletics.

"He's not going to go with us to Japan," Francona said Sunday. "Talked to him this morning about it. He completely understands. ... It's just not the right thing to do."

Baseball's winningest pitcher last season threw Sunday for the first time in eight days since hurting his back. But Beckett might not even join the team in Los Angeles for three exhibition games against the Dodgers on March 28-30.

Pitching coach John Farrell said Beckett felt no discomfort or restrictions in his arm action and his follow through. But Farrell was pessimistic that he would pitch in Boston's third or fourth regular season games, in Oakland on April 1 and 2. The Red Sox fol-

low those with three games in Toronto, then open their home season April 8 against Detroit.

Farrell said that facing the Athletics in the April series is "probably a little bit too aggressive" of a plan for Beckett to come back from the back spasms he felt on his first warmup pitch before an exhibition game against Florida on March 8. He was replaced before it started.

On Sunday, Beckett threw 25 pitches from 60 feet and 10 more from 75 feet on flat ground to Farrell. He also threw 11 warmups.

"The fact that he feels nothing in there is a clear indication that the inflammation has subsided," Farrell said.

Beckett was not available for comment.

He's scheduled to throw from 90 feet on Monday and play long toss on Tuesday, both on flat ground, then get on the mound for a bullpen session on Thursday.

His teammates will be in Tokyo for exhibition games next Saturday and Sunday against Japanese teams and regular season games against Oakland on March 25 and 26 before flying to Los Angeles.

"We don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves, but we'll look to use those

games in L.A. to the best of our abilities," Farrell said, adding that it was too early to know whether Beckett would travel there until there was a more clear game schedule.

Beckett could pitch in a minor league game in Florida as he builds up his innings and pitch count.

After Sunday's session, the coach was encouraged, even though Beckett hadn't pitched against a regular major league lineup in spring training. His only two outings were against Boston College and in a "B" game with Minnesota.

"Any time frame for games, it's probably a little too early to tell that," Farrell said, "but I think the most encouraging thing was there was no residual effect or discomfort of any kind."

"One thing about Josh is he's very much in tune with his body. So as good as he felt, he knows that there are steps along the way that we'll look to accomplish. The main thing was even at 75 feet he felt like he got on it a little bit as far as intensity level."

Beckett started 30 games last year, going 20-7 with a 3.27 ERA. In the opener of the Red Sox sweep of the Rockies in the World Series, he allowed one run and six hits in seven innings of Boston's 13-1 victory.

Falcons negotiating Hall-to-Oakland deal



ATLANTA (AP)—The Atlanta Falcons are negotiating a trade that would send outspoken cornerback DeAngelo Hall to the Oakland Raiders for a second-round pick in the NFL draft.

A source familiar with the talks, speaking on condition of anonymity because the deal had not been finalized, confirmed the Falcons were discussing a trade for the 36th overall selection. The Falcons have the No. 3 pick in the opening round.

Hall is a two-time Pro Bowl selection, but he is nearly as well known for his outspoken demeanor. He clashed openly with former Falcons coach Bobby Petrino last season and was benched for a half after a sideline confrontation.

Hall was the Falcons' No. 1 pick in 2004.

Raiders owner Al Davis has always valued cornerbacks who can excel playing man-to-man coverage. Pairing Hall with Nnamdi Asomugha would give Oakland one of the top tandems in the game and perhaps the best for the Raiders since Mike Haynes and Lester Hayes helped the

team win its last Super Bowl following the 1983 season.

The move would also provide insurance if Asomugha were to leave as a free agent following next season. The Raiders placed the exclusive franchise tag on Asomugha, guaranteeing him at least \$9.465 million in 2008. They still would like to sign him to a long-term deal.

Asomugha had a breakthrough season in 2006, intercepting eight passes and becoming one of the top cover cornerbacks in the league. Asomugha had only one interception last season as teams often shied away from throwing to his side of the field and took advantage of Stanford Routt and Fabian Washington on the other side.

By acquiring Hall, that would be more difficult. Washington and Routt have not lived up to expectations in Oakland since being drafted with the team's first two picks in 2005.

If the Raiders complete the deal, they would have only one draft pick in the first three rounds. Oakland picks fourth in the opening round and traded its third-round pick last year to New England for a pick used to draft offensive lineman Mario Henderson.

Season sweep chances good with 6-11 Wilson—coach Boyet

MANILA, Philippines—Make way for the return of Wesley Wilson and Randy Holcomb in the local pro league.

Wilson and Holcomb, among imports who pounded the PBA hardcourt in the 2004-05 transition season, are hooking up with Sta. Lucia Realty and Alaska, respectively, in the coming 2008 Smart PBA Fiesta Cup.

Wilson, a product of Georgetown U, suited up for 10 games with the Shell Turbochargers averaging 28.6 points, 13.9 rebounds and 2.6 blocks while

Holcomb, a former Atlanta Hawk, played six games with the Talk n Text Phone Pals norming 25.5 points, 13.5 rebounds and 3.0 assists.

Despite their decent numbers, the two didn’t last the full distance of the tourney.

So far, Wilson, at 6-foot-11, is the tallest among imports already signed up for the season-ending tournament opening March 29 in Panabo City, Davao del Norte.

“January pa lang kausap na namin iyan. Tingin ko, malaki

maitutulong niya sa amin (We talked to him about playing for us since January),” said Sta. Lucia coach Boyet Fernandez of Wilson, playing out the last few games of his current stint in the Turkish league.

Alaska, meanwhile, settled with Holcomb after failing to strike a deal with the team’s first prospects, including a younger brother of NBA star Pau Gasol.

Both teams, however, seem satisfied with what they’ve got. “He’s my personal choice. I

still remember him playing for Shell. He can score, rebound and play defense. With him, I now have somebody who can clog the middle and solve our problem in rebounding,” said Fernandez.

Curiously, the Realtors were worst in the league in rebounds in the recent Philippine Cup despite having big men Kelly Williams, Dennis Espino and Marlou Aquino in their lineup.

The rock-solid import steered Shell to a fast start in the 2005 Fiesta Cup with his power plays

and ferocious work off the boards only to taper off towards the end, sparking rumors of injuries and contract dispute with management.

“I do remember Wesley av-

eraging almost 30 points and 20 rebounds in his early games with Shell. If he can do that for us, then we’ll have a good chance of winning,” said Fernandez. (www.pba.com.ph)

PATRIOTS

From Page 28

Nick Jones Jr. had two, while Ricky Joe Ruengel had one as the Braves improved to a 2-2 record.

Jones went 3-for-4 with a triple to go with his two homers, while scoring four runs and had six RBIs. Ruengel also went 3-for-4 with three runs and had a grand slam to finish with four RBIs.

Patrick Reyes had a grand slam

while Sammy Limes had a two-RBI home run for the Pirates.

Hustlers 4, McDonald’s 3

Rhobby Kaipat scored the go-ahead run, while Jason Manahane slammed the door shut as the Hustlers squeezed out a 4-3 win over Team McDonald’s.

Kaipat, who had a fielder’s choice, scored on a Cody Kaipat single with two outs in the bottom of the fifth. The Hustlers could have added two more runs after Jesus Mafnas and Cody

Kaipat were left on base but Joseph Borja struck out.

Manahane then ended McDonald’s comeback bid in the top of the sixth. He gave up a single to Ken Taguchi but the McDonald’s shortstop was called out on a 2-1 putout play for the first out.

Manahane then struck out Enrique Itibus and Herman Guerrero to end the game.

Twins 14, Little Lions 3

Ton Camacho pitched in no relief

to lead the Twins to a 14-3 crushing of the Little Lions. Camacho gave up five hits with seven strikeouts and one walk.

Leadoff batter Roque Tenorio went 3-for-4 with a triple, two runs, and one RBI, while Roberty Tudela went 2-for-3 with two doubles, two runs, and an RBI.

Saturday’s games saw the Dolphins cruising past DRE’s, 15-1, while the Red Sox tamed the Dragons, 6-4, and Hustlers II eclipsing the Suns, 14-3. The Survivors crushed the Athletics, 14-3, in the final match.

XTERRA

From Page 28

Villafria then never let up knowing he is facing a good long-distance runner in the person of Suzuki. The Coco Restaurant employee, who is also training for the Mt. Fuji Marathon in July, pounded the Beach Road pavement and returned to AMP with the fifth overall best time of 58:33.

Villafria, who was glad to fin-

ish the run leg in less than an hour, was only six seconds behind XTERRA Saipan top amateur Eli Torgeson, 58:27.

Suzuki finished the 15-km run leg in 1:08:49 as his partnership with Stall and Quinn had a combined time of 3:28:37 to place second in the relay. They trailed the squad of Wong, Calage, and Villafria by 17:09.

Kabiriel returned to triathlon competition after a yearlong absence, teaming up with the recovering Daly and still finished third

with a total time of 3:38:18.

The women’s team of Adeana Shendal Greenlee, Tina Goodwin, and Ericka Frink won the relay division with a combined time of 4:06:45, followed closely by the duo of Monica Yamaguchi and Heather Kennedy (4:07:01).

The “Johnson Sisters” placed third, anchored by 2007 Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association Female Athlete of the Year Sarah’s third-best relay swim time of 30 minutes flat. Mom Betty did the bike

in 2:22:05, while Katie ran in 1:19:25.

In the mixed division, the team of Laila Qudsi, Timothy Lang, and Nick Swain topped the event in 3:38:25. They placed fourth overall among the relay teams trailing Kabiriel and Daly by only seven seconds.

The duo of Mamiko Oshima and Joshua Berger came in second in the mixed event with a total time of 3:59:14, while Kegan Spector Hall and Byeng-Ju An finished third, 4:21:19.

FIESTA-GRAND

From Page 28

with the finals taking place the following week on April 6.

Sanciangco’s and Esdreton’s fourth quarter scoring outburst and sticky defense on PIC’s Derrick Tudela and Butch Kaipat were enough to make sure Fiesta-Grand ends its season on a winning note.

Sanciangco finished with 32 points, seven rebounds, two assists, and three steals, while the speedy Esdreton backed him up with 30 points, 13 rebounds, six assists, and five steals.

Tudela and Kaipat combined for 32 points, 20 rebounds, and four assists to lead the scoring for PIC, which led for most of the game, but was held to a mere six markers in the final quarter. Kaipat also had five steals. James Abuy and Marino Pungilug added 14 and 13 each.

ROCK STEADY

From Page 28

San Nicolas went 3-for-3 with three runs, two triples, and two RBIs, while Secharmidal, 3-for-5, had a three-run home run to go with his three runs and four RBIs. Secharmidal blasted a three-

In the first game, Darwin Barbo scored 12 of his game-high 32 points in the fourth quarter to lead Aqua Resort to a 103-101 come-from-behind win over Hafadai Beach Hotel.

Barbo, who also had 14 rebounds, was unstoppable in the fourth period to resuscitate Aqua Resort’s waning title defense bid. Gil Gapor finished with 21 points and nine rebounds, while Mike Achas and Glen Aquino, who also grabbed 11 rebounds, had 16 and 15 apiece.

Pete Iguel’s 31 points led Hafadai’s losing cause, while Remar Mendoza, Michael Olaitiman, and Derrick Nedlic scored 25, 21, and 17 more. Joel Guinto only had seven points but finished with a season-high 18 rebounds.

Jerryfel Mangahis and Dennis Vinas combined for half of their team’s points to help Saipan World Resort end its campaign on a winning note—a 103-69 rout of Aquarius Beach Tower.

Mangahis and Vinas tallied 55 points, 10 rebounds, 14 assists, and seven steals, while Jam Navarro ended up with 22 markers, nine rebounds, and five steals. James Wabinga chipped in 20 points.

George Barbo paced Aquarius, which lost all of its games, with 31 points and nine rebounds, while Rick Brien added 15 points, eight rebounds, and five assists.

Frank Sarmiento tallied 11 markers, while Marvin Achas scored 10 points and had 11 rebounds.

First Game

Aqua Resort Club 103 – Barbo 32, Gapor 21, M. Achas 16, Aquino 15, Marchadesch 9, Casabuena 4, Torre 4, Calvo 2.

Hafadai Beach Hotel 101 – Iguel 31, Mendoza 25, Olaitiman 21, Nedlic 17, Guinto 7.

Scoring by quarters: 20-22, 49-52, 76-84, 103-101.

Referees: Arnold Mesa and

Tim Mafnas started for Rock Steady pitching for three scoreless innings with no hits and five strikeouts and one walk. Roy Celis relieved Mafnas in the fourth inning, giving up one earned run on three hits fanning four while walking three batters.

Last Thursday, Justin Reyes

Dado Vistal.

Second Game

Saipan World Resort 103 – Mangahis 28, Vinas 27, Navarro 22, Wabinga 20, Aguon 6.

Aquarius Beach Tower 69 – Barbo 31, Brien 15, Sarmiento 11, Achas 10, Camacho 2.

Scoring by quarters: 19-22, 43-31, 76-46, 103-69.

Referees: Jesse Pabula and Manny Sitchon.

Third Game

Fiesta-Grand 98 – Sanciangco 32, Esdreton 30, David 9, Manglona 8, Opono 7, Carino 6, Jinang 3, Dela Torre 2, Licup 1.

Pacific Islands Club 92 – Kaipat 16, Tudela 16, Abuy 14, Pungilug 13, Tolentino 9, Bartolo 6, Lee 6, Fernandez 5, Ngeskebei 5, Patricio 2.

Scoring by quarters: 19-23, 38-44, 66-65, 98-92.

Referees: Eric Artillaga and Gilbert Espinosa.

scored the game-winning run on a Masao Hoshiro double to lead the Dreams to a 16-15 decision over the D9ers.

With no outs in the bottom of the ninth, Justin Reyes had a lead off single while Jason Reyes grounded out. Hoshiro then doubled to left to bring in Justin Reyes for the winning run.

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Bing back-to-back for Raphael

By **MARK RABAGO**
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ASSISTANT EDITOR



Raphael Zapanta won his second consecutive Bing Prince/Princess of the Lanes Tenpin Bowling Tournament last Sunday at the Saipan Bowling Center in San Jose.

Zapanta followed up his victory last month with a four-game score of 759 and an average of 189.75 to win the March roll-off.

The 13-year-old Chacha Junior High School student started off with a 193 before going berserk in the second game with a 205. He cooled off with a 147 in the third game before hitting his stride again in the fourth game with a 214.

Zack Cruz finished seven pins shy of Zapanta's total with his 752 pinfalls and 188 average. He came away with a four-game series of 176, tournament-high 223, 140, and 213.

Jamie Vales also finished in the money list with her 638 pinfalls and 159.5 average. The younger sister of national bowler Jerrie fired 139, 206, 159, and 134.

Zapanta, Cruz, and Vales took home \$20, \$15, and \$10, respectively. All three also won a case of cream each.

January winner J.D. Torres (622 total, 155.5 average), Marion McKenzie (582, 145.5), Ryan Gutierrez (536, 134), Troy Verdager (528, 132), Mayanne McKenzie (504, 126), Niko Gutierrez (408, 102), and Toby Verdager (267, 66.75) also took part in the competition.

In the Budweiser King and Queen of the Lanes, Si-



Back-to-back Bing Prince/Princess of the Lanes Tenpin Bowling Tournament winner Raphael Zapanta is flanked by runners-up Zack Cruz, right, and Jamie Vales after the competition Sunday at the Saipan Bowling Center in San Jose.

mon Manacop leads the men's roll-off with a first day score of 890 (222.5 average), while Mindy Taitano is pacing the women with her 705 and 176.25.

Results of Day 2 of the two-day King and Queen of

the Lanes were still not available as of press time.

The Bing Prince/Princess of the Lanes as well as the Budweiser King and Queen of the Lanes are sponsored by MARPAC.

X-Terminators, Shirley's win debuts in FMI league

By **JON PEREZ**
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REPORTER



The Advance X-Terminators and Shirley's Coffee Shop scored opening day wins at the start of the 2008 Friends of the Marianas Inter-Color Basketball League last Friday night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The X-Terminators defeated an undermanned TASI Tours Giants, 98-91, while Shirley's staved off SMF-Seabridge's repeated rallies to score a 122-112 win.

Etsel Mendoza scored 11 of his team's points in the fourth quarter to outscore the Giants, 33-17, and open up their title bid on a winning note.

Kelvin Fitial and Jon Lim added 12 each for the X-Terminators, which took a slim 46-41 lead at the half. Gyles Ruloked and Melvin Villarin added 10 apiece for the victors.

Danny Bicara muscled his way inside the paint, finishing with 22 points to pace the Giants' scoring, while Bernard Aquino chipped in 16 markers.

Leo Factor, Eroll Peredo, and Sonny Rañola contributed 10 each, while guard Pando Muleta was held to nine markers.

The Giants, which is composed of the core of powerhouse team Visminda, missed the services of big men Ed Cosino and Jawn Joyner, and guard Banjo Basila.

In the second game, Elmer Esdrelon took his game-long brilliance in the HANMI Cup into the FMI league to lead Shirley's to a 122-112 win over SMF-Seabridge.



Bernard Montano, left, of Shirley's Coffee Shop pump fakes an SMF-Seabridge player in their Friday game in the opening of the Friends of the Marianas Inter-Color Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Esdrelon, who is one of Fiesta-Grand Hotel's scorers in the HANMI Cup, scored 22 of his game-high 31 points in the fourth quarter to foil the repeated comeback tries of the Seabridge five.

John Santos had 24 points while Ryan Sanciango finished with 19. Bing Marasigan, Bernard Montano, and Ronald Delos Reyes scored 15, 13, and 12 each.

Leo Itaas paced Seabridge with 23 points, while James Villacrusis chipped in 21 more but failed to get additional scoring support from their teammates.

First Game

Advance X-Terminators 98 – E. Mendoza 20, Fitial 12, Lim 12, Ruloked 10, Villarin 10, Estolas 8, J. Mendoza 7, Gamboa 6, Dayrit 5, Artates 4, Barrios 2, Capalad 2.

TASI Tours Giants 81 – Bicara 22, Aquino 16, Factor 10, Peredo 10, Rañola 10, Muleta 9, Talania 4.

Scoring by quarters: 22-17, 46-41, 65-64, 98-81.

Referees: Eric Artillaga and Dado Vistal.

Second Game

Shirley's Coffee Shop 122 – Esdrelon 31, Santos 24, Sanciango 19, Marasigan 15, Montano 13, Delos Reyes 12, Guiab 5, Garcia 2, Mercurio 1.

SMF-Seabridge 112 – Bernardo 23, L. Itaas 23, Villacrusis 21, Mortos 9, Cayetano 7, Lerio 6, Jugos 4, Manansala 4, Moises 4, Mina 3, Capalad 2, Demigillo 2, J. Itaas 2, Siriban 2.

Scoring by quarters: 25-20, 55-46, 91-78, 122-112.

Referees: Eric Artillaga and Dado Vistal.

Mr. Unorthodox rules March tee off

By **MARK RABAGO**
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Jess "Mr. Unorthodox" Wabol ruled the Refalwasch Golf Association March Ace of the Month Tournament after his qualifying score of 67 withstood the onslaught of par-busters last Sunday at the Coral Ocean Point Golf Resort in Koblerville.

Wabol shot the five-under 67 last March 1 at the same golf course, but the tournament director of RGA had to thank his lucky stars that Asterio Tawanpi, who bested the 67 with his own 64 last Sunday,

already won the February Ace.

RGA rules prevent winners to repeat in a year, yielding the championship to the next best score.

Wabol played last Sunday but was only able to fire a net 74.

While Tawanpi, the son of master navigator Mau Pialug, had the day's best score, newcomer Tars Olopai debuted strong with a second-place net score of 70. Third place went to Joe Demapan after the former Department of Public Works secretary shot a net 72.

Demapan bested Louie Tilipao, junior golfer Jay Choi, and Jordan Kossam in a scorecard tiebreak after all three also broke par with their net scores.

Other players that took part in the weekend event were Adam Hardwicke (73 net), Bill Kaipat (77), Andy Nepaial (77), Bae Yong Man (76), junior golfer Luis Byun (78), Palik Thompson (80), Joe Wabol (82), Sonny Flores (83), and Jess K. Wabol (87).



Wabol

In the closest to the pin competition, Nepaial was without peer in hole No. 3, while Man was the man in hole No. 11.

In related news, RGA reminded the public that that the club has halved its

membership dues for 2008 from the long-standing fee of \$50 to only \$25.

This happened after RGA recognized the hard economic times and decided to give its members and future members a break by slashing the cost of becoming part of RGA.

The club hopes that by making membership in RGA a little lighter in the pocket, more weekend warriors will now return to the golf links and renew their membership or apply as new members of the golf club.

For more information about RGA's new membership policies and other competitions held by the club, contact president Adam Hardwicke at 483-2926 or tournament director Jess Wabol at 233-3673.

Guam to join 9th Goodwill table tennis meet

By **JON PEREZ**
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REPORTER



Guam will send a three-person team in the upcoming 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament slated on March 29 and 30 at

the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino ballroom on Tinian. Games will start at 9am.

Team Guam will be led by 7th Palau South Pacific Mini Games veteran Carlos Gumataotao, who helped his team win the silver medal in 2005 in Koror.

Edmund Ho and Hanamoto will join Gumataotao as they battle two three-man teams from host Tinian and the visiting Saipan squad.

Tinian's Mark Ma, Charlie Cheng, and Luke Lu will lead Tinian A, while Tinian B is composed of Robin Lu, Liang Wei Bin with the third player a toss up between Bright Liu and Alfred Yu.

Micro Games women's singles gold medalist Jean Shi, team gold medal winners Su Yong Dong and Budhi Gurung are the members of Saipan Team A, while Peter De Leon, Con Pobre, and Marianas Table Tennis Association president Steve Lim comprises Saipan B.

A player needs to win five out of the 12 scheduled matches in order to move on to the semifinals where they will play a knockout format to determine the top two finalists in the two-day ping-pong tournament.

Each player from five teams will play a total of 12 games against players from the opposing squads. It is Guam's first time to join the annual goodwill tournament.

In October last year, Saipan scored a 21-15 win over Tinian in the 2007 Saipan vs. Tinian Goodwill Games at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

After taking a 9-8 lead following the first 17 games of the one-day tournament, ping-pong players from Saipan got rolling in the afternoon matches, taking 12 of the final 19 matches to win the biannual Goodwill Games between the two islands, 21-15.

Leading the charge for MATTa was Su's undefeated 6-0 record with Gurung's 5-1 mark and the 4-2 record of Shi backing him up.

Gurung's only loss came against Ma, while Shi had her setbacks exacted by the Lu brothers.

Tinian's top triumvirate of Ma and Lu brothers all finished with identical 4-2 records, while their supporting cast of Liu, Zhang, and Qu were a combined 3-15 in the win-loss column.

In April last year, Tinian made sure the perpetual cup remained on Tinian as the powerhouse TDHC table tennis club dominated the MATTa delegation in the first leg of the 2007 Saipan vs. Tinian Goodwill Games.

Tinian's top pen-holders beat Saipan's best paddlers, 28-21, in a showdown between teams made up of six veterans of 2006's gold-medal winning CNMI Men's National Table Tennis Team at the TDHC ballroom.



Bing back-to-back for Raphael

Raphael Zapanta won his second consecutive Bing Prince/Princess of the Lanes Tenpin Bowling Tournament last Sunday at the Saipan Bowling Center in San Jose.

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Saipan Tribune Sports

Rockets extend streak to 22, beat Lakers

Rafer Alston scored 31 points and hit eight 3-pointers, both career highs, and the Houston Rockets beat the Los Angeles Lakers 104-92 to extend their winning streak to 22 and claim sole possession of first place.

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Patriots' 42-game win streak ends

Ol'Aces beat defending champs, 2-1

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Jeremy Lizama outpitched Jeremy Rabauliman and Jared Sablan to lead Ol'Aces to a 2-1 win over the defending champions Patriots on Sunday in the Major division of the Saipan Little League at the Miguel Basa "Tan Ge" Pangelinan Field.

It was the first loss for the Patriots of manager Thelma Mizer in three years and ended their 42-game winning streak that started in the 2006 season.

The Patriots, whose name is in honor of American troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, last lost to Team McDon-

ald's on May 1, 2005. The Patriots, then sponsored by VFW, suffered a 3-12 crushing from McDonald's.

Lizama pitched 5.2 innings, limiting the Patriots to an earned run on four hits, a season-high 13 strikeouts, and one walk. Lizama allowed Sablan, who went 2-for-3, to hit a solo inside-the-park home run in the top of the third for the Patriots' lone run.

Rabauliman pitched 3 1/2 innings of no-hit ball and also had nine strikeouts and two walks before being replaced by Sablan in the bottom of the fourth.

Sablan pitched in relief, giving up one run on three hits with six strikeouts and one walk.

Braves 16, Pirates 12

Three inside-the-park home runs led the Braves to a 16-12 win over the Pirates.

See PATRIOTS on Page 26



A Patriots batter waits for the pitch in this file photo taken during their game against the Braves in the Saipan Little League at the Miguel Basa "Tan Ge" Pangelinan Field.

XTERRA relay winners also top Tagaman

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

If an award for the Pacific Islands Club Double is given to a team, the trio of Rezne Wong, Rene Calage, and Ronald Villafria could have won it hands down.

Wong, Calage, and Villafria won their own PIC Double by sweeping the Saipan Sportsfest after topping the relay division of the 19th Tagaman Triathlon on Saturday at American Memorial Park.

The team, whose triumvirate was formed by Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan president Stan Good, bested 18 other squads that are made up of the same faces that joined last

week's 7th XTERRA Saipan Championship.

With Wong anchoring the team with an impressive swim, Calage tailing the pros in the bike, and Villafria among the Top 5 finishers in the run, their team completed the 2-kilometer swim, 60-km bike, and 15-km run in a blistering time of three hours, 11 minutes, and 28 seconds.

Their 3:11:28 time shattered last year's record of 3:33:18 set by 2007 champions Jack Kabiriel and Kieran Daly. They had a total time of 3:40:49 in last week's XTERRA Saipan.

Wong was again the first swimmer out of the water, beating professionals Andrew Noble, Jim Vance, Masayuki Matsumaru, Noriko Takano, Ka-On Cho,

and Seok-Joo Han.

Wong logged in a time of 27 minutes and 29 seconds to give his teammates a good lead heading into the bike leg. He built a good three-minute and 48-second lead over Kai Staal (31:17), who is the swimmer of the second place squad also composed of biker Russ Quinn and runner Yoshi Suzuki.

Saipan Swim Club member Cooper Graf placed second to Wong in the swim leg with a time of 29:30.

Calage then breezed through the bike course with Quinn playing catch up. Calage finished eighth overall among the bikers with an impressive time of 1:45:26 to enjoy a three-minute and five-second lead over Quinn, 1:48:31.

See XTERRA on Page 26



Wong



Calage



Villafria

Fiesta-Grand completes one-loss season

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Fiesta-Grand Hotel concluded its campaign in the 2nd Annual HANMI Cup Inter-Hotel Basketball League on a winning note, beating Pacific Islands Club, 98-92, to complete its one-loss season Sunday night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Ryan Sanciango and Elmer Esdrelon combined for 38 points in the second half to lead Fiesta-Grand to victory. It thus claimed the league pennant after registering its 10th straight win and 11th overall against one loss in the HANMI Cup—which is being sponsored by Titans Chivas Life, PTI, Coca-Cola Bottlers Micronesia, and Western Sales Trading Company.

PIC dropped to an 8-4 record to tie defending champion Aqua Resort Club. Both teams split their elimination round games but Aqua Resort earned the second spot in the playoffs due to a higher quotient.

Aqua Resort and PIC will again face-off in the semifinal round, while Hyatt Regency Saipan, with its 7-5 record at fourth place, will take on Fiesta-Grand in the knockout playoff round with the winners advancing to the finals.

The semifinals will be played on March 30

See FIESTA-GRAND on Page 26



OSCAR YEMA

Fiesta-Grand Hotel's Ryan Sanciango, seen here in a file photo, finished with 32 points, seven rebounds, two assists, and three steals to lead his team to a 98-92 come-from-behind win over Pacific Islands Club Sunday night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Rock Steady, Dreams share SML lead

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Rock Steady and the new-look Korean Dreams share the top spot in the 3rd Annual Budweiser-Saipan Major League after beating separate opponents in last week's action at the Francisco M.

Palacios Baseball Field.

Rock Steady tamed last year's finalist Tigers, 21-2, on Friday, while the Dreams escaped with a 16-15 win over the D9ers last Thursday.

Rock Steady and the Dreams, fortified by standouts in the Saipan Little League program, hold similar 3-0 slates to occupy the top spot in the eight-team field.

They are expected to part

ways following the outcome of yesterday's match between Rock Steady and Kabur, which were playing at press time.

Byron Kaipat and Nick San Nicolas went perfect at the plate, while Oliver Secharmidal homered to lead Rock Steady's hit parade batting a combined 24-for-46 in the game. Kaipat went 4-for-4 with three runs and two RBIs.

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